ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/travelsinfarwest0011reub

Early Western Travels
1748-1846

Volume XXVII

A View of the Rocky Mountains

Travels in the Far West

1836-1841

I. The Far West: or, a Tour beyond the Mountains. By Edmund Flagg

II. Letters and Sketches, with a Narrative of a Year's Residence among the Indian Tribes of the Rocky Mountains. By Father Pierre Jean de Smet, S.J.

Edited with Notes, Introductions, Index, etc., by

Reuben Gold Thwaites, LL.D.

Editor of "The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents," "Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition," "Hennepin's New Discovery," etc.

(Separate publication from "Early Western Travels: 1748-1846," in which series these two reprints appeared as Volumes XXVI and XXVII)

Volume II

Cleveland, Ohio
The Arthur H. Clark Company
1906

14731

CONTENTS OF VOLUME XXVII

I

THE FAR WEST; OR, A TOUR BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS. Embracing Outlines of Western Life and Scenery; Sketches of the Prairies, Rivers, Ancient Mounds, Early Settlements of the French, etc., etc. (Chapters xxxiii-xli of Vol. II, completing the publication). *Edmund Flagg*

Author's Table of Contents 15
Text 19

II

LETTERS AND SKETCHES: with a Narrative of a Year's Residence among the Indian Tribes of the Rocky Mountains. *Pierre Jean de Smet, S. J.*

Author's Preface 129
Text:
BOOK I: Letters I-XII, February 4-December 30, 1841 133
BOOK II: Narrative of a Year's Residence among the Indian Tribes of the Rocky Mountains (comprised in Letters XIII-XVI, August 15-November 1, 1842) . . . 321
Explanation of the Indian Symbolical Catechism 405

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

14,731

ILLUSTRATIONS TO VOLUME XXVII

"A View of the Rocky Mountains." From De Smet's *Letters and Sketches* . . . . . *Frontispiece*
Allegorical sketch 126
Facsimile of title-page, De Smet's *Letters and Sketches* . . 127
"Worship in the Desert" 139
"Kanza Village". 195
"Interior of a Kanza Lodge" 203
"Chimney" 217
"Devil's Gate" 239
"Soda Springs" 245
"Fording the River Platte" 271
"Sheyenne Warriors" 275
"Indian Mode of Travelling" 325
"Apparition" 345
"Indian Symbolical Catechism"—folding plate . . . 403

CONTENTS

XXXIII

Blackness of Darkness — Fall of a Forest-tree — A sublime Incident — Musings — A Moral — A Wolf — A Meal — A Mistake — A broiling Sun — The "Heights of Chester "— A noble View — An Island — A "Bend "— A Steamer — Chester — Site and Anticipations — A romantic Pathway — The Sycamores — The Undergrowth — The Bluffs — Forest Quietude — The wild-grape Vines — Size, Tortuosity, and Tenacity — A Juliet-bower — A Prediction — Kaskaskia Bottom — An elegant Farm and Mansion — The Outhouses — The Harvest-fields and Grounds — The Bluffs — The Village . . . 19

XXXIV

Antiqueness — A Proposition and Corollary —"All is New " — Freshness of Natural Scenery — The immigrant Inhabitants — An Exception — A serious Duty — A laudable Resolution — A gay Bevy — A Hawser-ferry — A Scene on the Kaskaskia — "Old Kaskaskia "— Structure of Dwellings — Aspect of Antiquity — A Contrast —"City of the Pilgrims "— The Scenes of a Century — Lane-like Streets — Old Customs — "The Parallel ceases "— The same Fact with the Spaniards — The Cause — The French Villagers — The Inn-gallery — A civil Landlord — The *Table d'Hôte* — A Moonlight Ramble — The old Church — The Courthouse — The fresh Laugh — The Piano — The Brunettes 26

XXXV

The Explorers of the West — The French Jesuits — Cause of the Undertaking — The Tale of the Hunters — Marquette and Joliet [viii] — Their Exploration — The Natives — The Illini — A Village — *Manito* of the Missouri — The Illinois — Amazed Delight — Joliet's Narrative — Marquette — Name to the River — Joliet's Reward — Lapse of Years — M. Robert, Cavalier de la Salle — His Talent, Ambition, and Enterprise — Visit to Canada — Success at Paris — Tonti and Hennepin — Exploration — The Illinois — An Indian Village — The Hoard of Corn — Peoria Lake — Treatment by the Natives — Loss of the Supply-boat — Fort *"Creve Cœur "*— Its Site — "Spring Bay "— The Indian War — Danger of La Salle — The Mutiny

— The Poison — Exploration of the Mississippi — The Falls — Captivity — Hennepin's Travels — Character of these early Writers — "Fort St. Louis "— Second Expedition of La Salle — The *Osage* — A Village of Natives — The *Oubachi* — Fort *Prudhomme* — Formal Possession — *Louisiana* — Ceremonies at the Gulf — River "St. Louis "— Villages founded — Fate of La Salle — Retributive Justice — Fate of Marquette — Decease and Burial — Canadian Colonies — Their Design — Mining Expeditions — M. de Seur — Disappointment — *Couriers du bois* — *Petits Paysans* — Merry Mortals — Origin of Kaskaskia — Name — Depôt of Fur-trade — De Soto and the Tradition — His Death and Burial — Original Extent of Kaskaskia — The "Common Field "— The Grant — Policy of French and Spanish Governments — "Common Fields" and "Commons "— Regulations — Congress-grants — Harmony with the Savages — The Cause — Exaggeration — Early Peace and Prosperity — Jesuit College — Law's Scheme — The Design — *Les Illinois* — The Failure — The "South Sea Bubble " — Prosperity of Kaskaskia — Luxuriance of Agriculture — A chimerical Design — Cession and Recession — An unwelcome Change — Removal and the Causes 34

XXXVI

Portraiture of Character — The Difficulty — The French Villager of the Mississippi — His ordinary Deportment — Hospitality — Laws and Courts — Scholastic Proficiency — Affairs of the Nation—"A Burden!"—Their Virtues—The Helpmate—Religious Faith — Festivals — Their Property — The Change — Their Avocations — Their Idiom — A Contrast — The Peculiarities — Costume — Amusements — Slaves — Early Government — An unwelcome Change —"Improvement!"— A hateful [ix] Term — The Steam-engine — The old Edifices — The Streets — Advantages of the Change — The Contrast — The poorer Class — Evils of the Change — Superior Enterprise . 52

XXXVII

Delay on an interesting Subject — Peculiarities of French and Spanish Villages similar — Social Intercourse — Old Legends — Dreamy Seclusion — Commercial Advantages of Kaskaskia — The Trade — The River — The Land-office — Population — Fort Gage — Clarke's Expedition — The Catholic Church — Erection — Its Exterior — The Interior — The Altar-lamp — Structure of the Roof — Surprise of the Villagers — Interdict on the Architect — The Belfry — The Bell — View from the Tower — The Churchyard — The first Record — Old Chronicles — The Nunnery — The Seminary — Departure from Kaskaskia — Farms of the French — A Reminiscence — " Indian

Old Point "— Extermination of the Norridgewocks — Details — The Obelisk to Father Rasle — Route to *Prairie du Rocher* — *Aubuchon* — Profusion of wild Fruit — Nuts — Grapes — A Wine Story — Mode of Manufacture — The Cliffs of *Prairie du Rocher* — "Common Field "— Productions — The *Bayou* — A Scene of Blood — A Century Slumber — Peculiarities — View from the Cliffs — Petrifactions — Simplicity and Ignorance — Characteristics of the French Villager — The Catholic Church — Unhealthy Site — Cause of a Phenomenon . . 59

XXXVIII

The Western Valley — Early Conception of its Extent inadequate — The French *Cordon* of Fortification — Origin of the Policy — Stations of Posts erected — Fort Chartres — Groves of wild Fruit — The Dark-browed Villager — His direction to the Ruins — Desertion and Dreariness of the Spot — Solemn Effect of the old Pile in the Forest — *Coup d'œil* — The Mississippi *Slough* — Erection of Fort Chartres — The Design — Expense — Material — Rebuilding — Village Cession, Recession, and the Results — Seat of Power — Form and Extent — Preservation of the Masonry — French Engineering — Original Structure of the Fortress — The Pride of its Prime — Its Scenes — The "Golden Age "— The "old Residenters "— The Pomp of War — A Shelter for the Night 73

[x] XXXIX

Fort Chartres — A romantic Scene — Legendary Lore — Erection of Fort Chartres — Enormous Expenditure — Needless Strength — The Engineer — His Fate — The "Buried Treasure "— The Money-diggers — Their Success — The " Western Hannibal "— Expedition against Vincennes — Capture of the French Villages — Siege of Fort Chartres — A successful *Ruse du Guerre* — A Scrap of History — The Capture of Fort Vincent — The Stratagem — Fort Du Quesne — Erection and History — Useless Strength — A Morning Scene — Philippe Francis Renault — His Mining Operations — The Village St. Philippe — The Cottonwood Forest — The Mississippi ! — A Mistake — A weary Plod — An Atmosphere of Pestilence — Causes of Disease — Salubrious Site for a Cabin — Precautions for the Emigrant — Diseases of the West — Fevers — Sickly Months —"Milk Sickness "— Its Cause and Effects — Fever and Ague — An Escape — A sick Family — The Consumptive — Refreshment — An early Settler 85

XL

The "Squatter" — His Character and Person — A View from the Bluffs — The ancient Indian Village — Reliques — The

Squatter's Reflections — His Wanderings — A Discovery — The Grave of a Chief — The Ancient Burial-grounds — Human Remains — A Coffin of Stone — The "Pigmy Race"— An Investigation — Ancient Pottery — The *Turtle* — The *Sinkholes* — Waterloo — Its Windmill and Courthouse — Bellefontaine — An evening Ride —"Hail Columbia!"— An *immortal* Name — A very poor Pun — A miserable Night — A pleasant Dawn — The American Bottom — Its Name — Extent — Boundaries — Bluffs — Lakes, their Cause and Consequence — Disease an Obstacle to Settlement — The Remedy — The *Grand Marais* — The Soil — Its Fertility — The appropriate Production 97

XLI

The American Bottom — Its alluvial Character — An interesting Query — The Ancient Lake — The Southern Limit — The Parapet of Stone — Alluvial Action on the Cliffs — A similar Expansion — The Eastern Limit and the Western — The "Mamelle [xi] Prairie"— Elevation of Country North — Cause of the Draining — The Rocks at "Grand Tower"— Abrasion of Waters — Volcanic Action — A Tide-spring — The "Blockhouse"— Geology of the Region — Volcanic Convulsions — Impress of Omnipotence — Reflections suggested — Ignorance and Indifference on the Subject — Remarks of Dr. Buckland and Cuvier — A very *ancient* Revolution — Huge Remains — Theory of Cuvier — Productions of the American Bottom — The Farms — Prairie-flowers — Mounds — *Prairie du Pont* — Refreshment — A novel Churn — A disagreeable Village — *Cahokia* — The Indian Tribe — The Settlement — The Mississippi — The Creek — Harmonious Intercourse — A Contrast— Early Inhabitants of Cahokia — Peculiarities of the Village — The "Common Field"— Grant of Congress — Cahokia at the present Time — Route to St. Louis — Sunset on the Water — View of the City — Moonlight — Arrival at St. Louis — A Farewell! . . . 108

THE FAR WEST

[PART II]

XXXIII[1]

"STRANGER, if thou hast learn'd a truth which needs
Experience more than reason, that the world
Is full of guilt and misery, and hast known
Enough of all its sorrows, crimes, and cares
To tire thee of it; enter this wild wood,
And view the haunts of Nature."

BRYANT.

THE moon had gone down; the last star had burned out in the firmament; and that deep darkness which precedes the dawn was brooding over the earth as the traveller turned away from the little inn at the village of Pinkneyville. Fortunately he had, the previous evening, while surveying the face of the region from the door of the hostelrie, gained some general idea of the route to [127] Kaskaskia; and now, dropping the reins upon his horse's neck, he began floundering along through a blackness of darkness perfectly Cimmerian. It was, indeed, a gloomy night. The early mists were rising, damp and chill, from the soil saturated with the showers of the preceding day; and the darkness had become of a density almost palpable to the sense. Crossing a narrow arm of the prairie in the direction presumed to be correct, my horse carried me into a dense wood, and, if possible, the darkness increased. I had penetrated some

[1] Volume xxvii of our series begins with chapter xxxiii of the original New York edition (1838) of Flagg's *The Far West*. The author is here describing the part of his journey made in the late summer or early autumn of 1836.— ED.

miles into the heart of the forest, and was advancing slowly upon my way, when my attention was suddenly arrested by a low, whispering, rustling sound in the depths of the wood at my right; this gradually increasing, was almost immediately succeeded by a crashing, thundering, rushing report, till every echo far and wide in that dark old wood was wakened, and the whole forest for miles around resounded with the roar. My horse, terrified at the noise, leaped and plunged like a mad creature. An enormous forest-tree had fallen within a dozen rods of the spot on which I stood. As I left the noble ruin and resumed my lonely way, my mind brooded over the event, and I thought I could perceive in the occurrence a powerful feature of the sublime. The fall of an aged tree in the noiseless lapse of time is ever an event not unworthy of notice; but, at a moment like this, it was surely so in an eminent degree. Ages since — long ere the first white man had pressed the soil of this Western world, and while the untamed denizens of the wilderness [128] roamed in the freedom of primitive creation — ages since had seen the germe of that mighty tree lifting up its young, green leaf from the sod, beneath the genial warmth of the sunlight and the summer wind. An age passed away. The tender stem had reared itself into a gigantic pillar, and proudly tossed its green head amid the upper skies: that young leaf, expanded and developed, had spread itself abroad, until, at length, the beasts of the earth had sought out its shade, and the tree stood up the monarch of the forest. Another age is gone, and the hoary moss of time is flaunting to the winds from its venerable branches. Long ago the thunderbolt had consecrated its lofty top with the baptismal of fire, and, sere and rifted, the storm-cloud now sings through its naked limbs. Like an aged man, its head is bleached with

years, while the strength and verdure of ripened maturity yet girdle its trunk. But the worm is at the root: rottenness at the heart is doing its work. Its day and its hour are appointed, and their bounds it may not pass. That hour, that moment is come! and in the deep, pulseless stillness of the night-time, when slumber falleth upon man and Nature pauses in her working, the offspring of centuries is laid low, and bows himself along the earth. Yet another age is gone; but the traveller comes not to muse over the relics of the once-glorious ruin. Long ago has each been mouldering away, and their dust has mingled with the common mother of us all. Ah! there is a *moral* in the falling of an aged tree!

[129] I was dwelling with rather melancholy reflections upon this casual occurrence, when a quick panting close at my side attracted my attention; a large, gaunt-looking prairie-wolf had just turned on his *heel* and was trotting off into the shade. The gray dawn had now begun to flicker along the sky, and, crossing a beautiful prairie and grove, I found myself at the pleasant farmhouse of a settler of some twenty or thirty years' standing; and dismounting, after a ride of eighteen miles, I partook, with little reluctance or ceremony, of an early breakfast. Thus much for the *night adventures of a traveller* in the woods and wilds of Illinois! My host, the old gentleman to whom I have referred, very sagely mistook his guest for a physician, owing to a peculiarly convenient structure of those indispensables ycleped saddle-bags; and was just about consulting his fancied man of medicines respecting the ailings of his "woman," who was reclining on a bed, when, to his admiration, he was undeceived.

Passing through an inconsiderable village on the north side of the Little Vermillion called Georgetown, my route lay through an extended range of hills and

barrens.[2] Among the former were some most intolerably tedious, especially to a horseman beneath a broiling sun, who had passed a sleepless night: but the sweep of scenery from their summits was beautiful and extensive. At length the traveller stood upon the " heights of Chester," and the broad Mississippi was rolling on its turbid floods a hundred yards beneath. The view is here a noble [130] one, not unlike that from the Alton or Grafton bluffs at the other extremity of the "American Bottom," though less extensive. Directly at the feet of the spectator, scattered along a low, narrow interval, lies the village of Chester. Upon the opposite bank the forest rolls away to the horizon in unbroken magnificence, excepting that here and there along the bottom the hand of cultivation is betrayed by the dark luxuriance of waving maize-fields. A beautiful island, with lofty trees and green smiling meadows, stretches itself along in the middle of the stream before the town, adding not a little to the picturesqueness of the scene, and, in all probability, destined to add something more to the future importance of the place. To the right, at a short distance, come in the soft-flowing waters of the Kaskaskia through deeply-wooded banks; and nearly in the same direction winds away the mirror-surface of the Mississippi for twenty miles, to accomplish a direct passage of but four, an occur-

[2] The Vermilion River (which Flagg incorrectly wrote Little Vermilion) rises, with several branches, in the western and southern portions of La Salle County, and flows north and west, entering Illinois River at Rock Island, in Livingston County.

Steelesville (formerly Georgetown) is about fifteen miles east of Kaskaskia, on the road between Pinkneyville and Chester; the site was settled on by George Steele in 1810. A block-house fort erected there in 1812 protected the settlers against attacks from the Kickapoo Indians. In 1825 a tread-mill was built, and two years later a store and post-office were erected. The latter was named Steele's Mills. The settlement was originally called Georgetown and later changed by an act of state legislature to Steeleville, being surveyed in 1832.— Ed.

rence by no means unusual in its course. As I stood gazing upon the scene, a steamer appeared sweeping around the bend, and, puffing lazily along with the current past the town, soon disappeared in the distance. From the heights an exceedingly precipitous pathway leads down to the village. Chester is one of the new places of Illinois, and, of course, can boast but little to interest the stranger apart from the highly scenic beauty of its situation.[3] It has been mostly erected within the few years past; and, for its extent, is a flourishing business place. Its landing is excellent, location healthy, [131] adjacent region fertile, and, for aught I know to the contrary, may, in course of years, rival even the far-famed Alton. Its landing, I was informed, is the only one for many miles upon the river, above or below, suitable for a place of extensive commerce.

From Chester, in a direction not far from north, a narrow pathway winds along beneath the bluffs, among the tall cane-brakes of the bottom. Leaving the Mississippi at the mouth of the Kaskaskia, it runs along the low banks of the latter stream, and begins to assume an aspect truly delightful. Upon either side rise the shafts of enormous sycamores to the altitude of an hundred feet, and then, flinging abroad and interlacing their long branches, form a living arch of exquisite beauty, stretching away in unbroken luxuriance for miles. Beneath springs from the rich loam a dense undergrowth of canes; a profusion of wild vines and bushes clustering with fruit serving effectually to exclude the sunbeams, except a few checkered spots here and there playing upon the foliage, while at inter-

[3] Chester is on the Mississippi River, in Randolph County, just below the mouth of Kaskaskia River. In the summer of 1829, Samuel Smith built the first house there, and two years later he, together with Mather, Lamb and Company, platted the town site. It was named by Jane Smith from her native town, Chester, England, and was made the seat of justice for Randolph in 1848.—Ed.

vals through the dark verdure is caught the flashing sheen of the moving waters. Upon the right, at the distance of only a few yards, go up the bluffs to the sheer height of some hundred feet, densely clothed with woods. The path, though exceedingly narrow and serpentine, is for the most part a hard-trodden, smooth, and excellent one when dry. The coolness and fragrance of these deep, old, shadowy woodlands has always for me a resistless charm. There is so much of quiet seclusion from the feverish turmoil of ordinary life within [132] their peaceful avenues, that, to one not wedded to the world, they are ever inexpressibly grateful.

> "The calm shade
> Shall bring a kindred calm, and the sweet breeze,
> That makes the green leaves dance, shall waft a balm
> To thy sick heart. Thou wilt find nothing here
> Of all that pain'd thee in the haunts of men,
> And made thee loathe thy life."

In the wild, fierce glaring of a summer noontide, when amid " the haunts of men" all is parched up, and dusty, and scathed, how refreshingly cool are the still depths of the forest! The clear crystal streamlet gushes forth with perennial laughter from the rock, seeming to exult in its happy existence; the bright enamelled mosses of a century creep along the gnarled old roots, and life in all its fairy forms trips forth to greet the eremite heart and charm it from the world. But there was one feature of the scene through which I was passing that struck me as peculiarly imposing, and to which I have not yet referred. I allude to the enormous, almost preternatural magnitude of the wild-grape vine, and its tortuosity. I have more than once, in the course of my wanderings, remarked the peculiarities of these vast parasites; but such is the unrivalled fertility, and the depth of soil of the Kaskaskia bottom, that vegetation of every kind there attains a size and pro-

portion elsewhere almost unknown. Six or seven of these vast vegetable serpents are usually beheld leaping forth with a broad whirl from the mould at the root of a tree, and then, writhing, and twining, and twisting [133] among themselves into all imaginable forms, at length away they start, all at once and together, in different directions for the summit, around which they immediately clasp their bodies, one over the other, and swing depending in festoons on every side. Some of these vines, when old and dried up by the elements, are amazingly strong ; more so, perhaps, than a hempen hawser of the same diameter.

Having but a short ride before me the evening I left Chester, I alighted from my horse, and leisurely strolled along through this beautiful bower I have been attempting to describe. What a charming spot, thought I, for a Romeo and Juliet! — pardon my roving fancy, sober reader — but really, with all my own sobriety, I could not but imagine this a delightful scene for a "Meet me by moonlight alone," or any other *improper* thing of the kind, whether or not a trip to Gretna Green subsequently ensued. And if, in coming years, when the little city of Chester shall have become all that it now seems to promise, and the venerable Kaskaskia, having cast her slough, having rejuvenated her withered energies, and recalled the days of her pristine *traditionary* glory; if then, I say, the young men and maidens make not this the consecrated spot of the long summer-evening ramble and the trysting-place of the heart, reader, believe us not; in the dignified *parlance* of the *corps editorial*, believe *us* not.

Some portions of the Kaskaskia bottom have formerly, at different times, been cleared and cultivated; but nothing now remains but the ruins of [134] tenements to acquaint one with the circumstance. The spot must have been exceedingly unhealthy in its wild state. There is, however,

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

one beautiful and extensive farm under high cultivation nearly opposite Kaskaskia, which no traveller can fail to observe and admire. It is the residence of Colonel M——, a French gentleman of wealth, who has done everything a cultivated taste could dictate to render it a delightful spot.[4] A fine, airy farmhouse stands beneath the bluffs, built after the French style, with heavy roof, broad balconies, and with a rare luxury in this region — green Venetian blinds. The outhouses, most of them substantially constructed of stone, are surpassed in beauty and extent only by the residence itself. Fields yellow with golden harvest, orchards loaded with fruit, and groves, and parks, and pastures sprinkled with grazing cattle, spread out themselves on every side. In the back-ground rise the wooded bluffs, gracefully rounded to their summits, while in front roams the gentle Kaskaskia, beyond which, peacefully reposing in the sunlight, lay the place of my destination.

Kaskaskia, Ill.

XXXIV

"Protected by the divinity they adored, supported by the earth which they cultivated, and at peace with themselves, they enjoyed the sweets of life without dreading or desiring dissolution."— NUMA POMPILIUS.

"A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye."
Castle of Indolence.

IN a country like our own, where everything is fresh and recent, and where nothing has yet been swept by the mellowing touch of departed time, any object which can lay but the most indifferent claim to antiquity fails not to be hailed with delighted attention. "You have," say they

[4] Flagg is probably referring to Colonel Pierre Menard. See our volume xxvi, p. 165, note 116.— ED.

of the other hemisphere, "no ivy-mantled towers; no moss-grown, castellated ruins; no donjon-keeps rearing in dark sublimity their massive walls and age-bleached battlements; nothing to span the mighty chasm of bygone years, and to lead down the fancy into the shadowy realms of the past; and, *therefore*, your country is steril in moral interest." Now, though this *corollary* is undoubtedly false, I yet believe the proposition in the main to be *true*: especially is this the case with regard to that region which lies west of the Alleghany range. Little as there may be in the elder sections of our Atlantic states to demand veneration for the past, no sooner does the traveller find himself gliding along the silvery wave [136] of the "beautiful river," than at the same moment he finds himself forsaking all that the fairy creations of genius have ever consecrated, or the roll of the historian chronicled for coming time. All is NEW. The very soil on which he treads, fertile beyond comparison, and festering beneath the undisturbed vegetation of centuries; the rolling forests, bright, luxuriant, gorgeous as on the dawn of creation; the endless streams pouring onward in their fresh magnificence to the ocean, all seem new. The inhabitants are emigrants late from other lands, and every operation of human skill on which the eye may rest betrays a recent origin. There is but a single exception to these remarks — those mysterious monuments of a race whom we know not of!

In consideration, therefore, of the circumstance that antiquities in this blessed land of ours are, indeed, very few and far between, I deem it the serious duty of every traveller, be he virtuoso or be he not, whenever once so happy as to lay his grasp upon an antique "in any form, in any shape," just to hold fast to the best of his ability! Such, reader, be it known, was my own praiseworthy determination when drawing nigh to the eastern shore of the

stream opposite the ancient French village Kaskaskia. The sun was going down, and as I approached the sandy edge of the sea-green water, a gay bevy of young folks were whirling the long, narrow, skiff-like ferry-boat like a bird across the stream, by means of a hawser to which it was attached, and which extended from shore to shore. In my own turn I stepped into the boat, and in a few moments the old French [137] negro had forced it half across the river, at this spot about three or four hundred yards in width. For one who has ever visited Kaskaskia in the last beautiful days of summer, a pen like my own need hardly be employed to delineate the loveliness of the scene which now opened upon the view. For miles the gleamy surface of the gentle Kaskaskia might be seen retreating from the eye, till lost at length in its windings through the forests of its banks, resting their deep shadows on the stream in all the calm magnificence of inanimate nature. The shore I was leaving swelled gracefully up from the water's edge, clothed in forests until it reached the bluffs, which towered abrupt and loftily; while here and there along the landscape the low roof of a log cabin could be caught peeping forth from the dark shrubbery. The bank of the stream I was approaching presented an aspect entirely the reverse; less lovely, but more picturesque. A low sandy beach stretched itself more than a mile along the river, destitute of trees, and rounding itself gently away into a broad green plain. Upon this plain — a portion of the American Bottom — at the distance of a few hundred yards from the water, is situated all that now remains of "old Kaskaskia." From the centre rises a tall Gothic spire, hoary with time, surmounted by an iron cross; and around this nucleus are clustered irregularly, at various intervals, the heavy-roofed, time-stained cottages of the French inhabitants. These houses are usually like those of the West

India planters — but a single story in height — and the surface which they occupy is, [138] of course, in the larger class, proportionably increased. They are constructed, some of rough limestone, some of timber, framed in every variety of position — horizontal, perpendicular, oblique, or all united — thus retaining their shape till they rot to the ground, with the interstices stuffed with the fragments of stone, and the external surface stuccoed with mortar; others — a few only — are framed, boarded, etc., in modern style. Nearly all have galleries in front, some of them spacious, running around the whole building, and all have garden-plats enclosed by stone walls or stoccades. Some of these curious-looking structures are old, having bided the storm-winds of more than a century. It is this circumstance which throws over the place that antiquated, venerable aspect to which I have alluded, and which equally applies to all the other villages of this peculiar people I have yet spoken of. The city of Philadelphia and this neglected village of Kaskaskia are, as regards age, the same to a year;[5] but while every object which, in the one, meets the eye, looks fresh as if but yesterday touched by the last chiselling of the architect, in the latter the thoughts are carried back at least to Noah's ark! Two centuries have rolled by since the "city of the Pilgrims" ceased to be a "cornfield;" but where will you now look for a solitary relic of that olden time? "State-street," the scene where American blood was first poured out by British soldiery;

[5] Philadelphia was founded in 1682. There has been much discussion about the exact date of the founding of Kaskaskia. E. G. Mason was of the opinion that this uncertainty had arisen in the confounding of Kaskaskia with an earlier Indian settlement of the same name on the Illinois River. It seems probable that Kaskaskia on the Mississippi was started in 1699. Consult E. G. Mason, "Kaskaskia and its Parish Records," in *Magazine of American History* (New York, 1881), vi, pp. 161-182, and *Chapters from Illinois History* (Chicago, 1901); also C. W. Alvord, *The Old Kaskaskia Records* (Chicago Historical Society, 1906). See also A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 69, note 132.— Ed.

"Old Cornhill;" the site of the "Liberty-tree;" and the wharf from which the tea was poured into the dock, are indeed pointed out to you as spots memorable [139] in the history of the "Leaguer of Boston;" and yonder frowns the proud height of Bunker's Hill; *there* lay the British battle-ships, and *there* was " burning Charlestown:" but, with almost the solitary exception of the "Old South" Church, with the cannon-ball imbedded in its tower, where shall we look for an *object* around which our associations may cluster? This is not the case with these old villages. A century has looked down upon the same objects, in the same situations and under the same relations, with a change scarcely appreciable. Yon aged church-tower has thrown its venerable shadow alike over the Indian *corn-dance*, the rude *cotillon* of the French villager, the Spanish *fandango*, the Virginia *reel*, and the Yankee *frolic*. Thus, then, when I speak of these places with reference to antiquity, I refer not so much to the actual lapse of years as to the present aspect and age of the individual objects. In this view there are few spots in our country which may lay more undisputed claim to antiquity than these early French settlements in the Western Valley.

There is one feature of these little villages to which I have not at this time alluded, but which is equally amusing and characteristic, and which never fails to arrest the stranger's observation. I refer to the narrowness of those avenues *intended* for streets. It is no very strange thing that in aged Paris structure should be piled upon structure on either side even to the clouds, while hardly a footpath exists between; but that in this vast Western world a custom, in all respects the same, should have prevailed, [140] surpasseth understanding. This must have resulted not surely from lack of *elbow-room*, but from the marvellous sociality of the race, or from that attachment to the cus-

toms of their own fatherland which the Frenchman ever betrays. In agriculture and the mechanic arts they are now about as well skilled, notwithstanding the improvements which they must perceive have been going on around them, as on the day their fathers first planted foot on this broad land. The same implements of husbandry and the arts which a century since were seen in France, are now seen here; the very vehicle they drive is the vineyard-car, which is presented us in representations of rustic life in the older provinces of the same land. The same characteristics of feeling and action are here displayed as there, and the Gallic tongue is sacredly transmitted from father to son. But here the parallel ceases. We can trace but little resemblance between the staid, simple-hearted French villager of the Mississippi Valley, and the gay, frivolous, dissolute cotemporary of the fifteenth Louis; still less to the countryman of a Marat or a Robespierre, rocked upon the bloody billow of the "Reign of Terror;" and less than either to the high-minded, polished Frenchman of the nineteenth century. The same fact has been remarked of the Spanish population of Florida and Mexico; their resemblance to their ancestors, who have been slumbering for more than three centuries in their graves, is far more striking than to their present brethren of "Old Castile." The cause of this is not difficult to detect. The customs, the [141] manners, the very idioms of nations never remain for any considerable period of time invariably the same: other men, other times, other circumstances, when assisted by civil or religious revolutions, produce surprising changes in the parent land, while the scanty colony, separated by mountains and seas, not more from the roar and commotion than from the influenced sphere of these events, slumbers quietly on from century to century, handing down from father to son those peculiarities, unaltered, which

migrated with them. Climate, soil, location, though far from exclusive, are by no means inconsiderable agents in affecting character in all its relations of intellect, temperament, and physical feature. And thus has it chanced that we now look upon a race of men separated but a few centuries from the parent stock, yet exhibiting characteristics in which there are few traits common to both.

It was through one of those long, narrow, lane-like streets to which I have alluded, and, withal, a most unconscionably filthy one, that I rode from the landing of the ferry to the inn. The low-roofed, broad-galleried cottages on either side seemed well stocked with a race of dark-eyed, dark-haired, swarthy-looking people, all, from the least unto the tallest, luxuriating in the mellow atmosphere of evening; all, as if by the same right, staring most unceremoniously at the stranger; and all apparently summing up, but in the uncouthest style imaginable, their divers surmises respecting his country, lineage, occupation, etc., etc. The forms and features of these French villagers are perfectly unique, at least in our [142] country, and one can hardly fail distinguishing them at first sight, even among a crowd, once having seen them. Their peculiarities are far more striking than those of our German or Irish population. A few well-dressed, *genteel* gentlemen were lounging about the piazza of the inn as I drew nigh, and a polite landlord, courteously pressing forward, held the stirrup of the traveller and requested him to alight. Something of a contrast, this, to the attention a stranger usually is blessed with from not more than nine tenths of the worthy publicans of Illinois. Alas! for the aristocracy of the nineteenth century! But *n'importe*. With the easy air of gentility and taste which seemed to pervade the inn at Kaskaskia in all its departments, few could have failed to be pleased. For myself, I was also

surprised. Everything about the establishment was in the French style, and here was spread the handsomest *table d'hôte* it has been my fortune to witness in Illinois.

The moon was pouring gloriously down in misty mellowness upon the low-roofed tenements of this antiquated village, when, leaving my chamber, I stepped from the inn for a leisure stroll through its streets and lanes. Passing the gray old church,[6] bathed in the dim, melting moonlight of a summer night, such as for more than a century had smiled upon its consecrated walls as one year had chased away another, the next considerable structure which arrested my attention was a huge, ungainly edifice of brick, like Joseph's coat, *of many colours*, forsooth, and, withal, sadly ruinous as regards the item of windows. This latter circumstance, aside from [143] every other, agreeable to all observed precedent, would have notified me of the fact that this was neither more nor less than a western courthouse. Continuing my careless ramble among the cottages, I passed several whose piazzas were thronged with young people; and at intervals from the midst rang out, on the mild evening air, the gay fresh laugh, and the sweet, soft tones of woman. A stately structure of stone, buried in foliage, next stood beside me, and from its open doors and windows issued the tumultuous melody of the piano. A few steps, and the innocent merriment of two young girls hanging upon a gentleman's arms struck my ear. They passed me. Both were young; and one, a gazelle-eyed brunette, in the pale moonlight, was beautiful. The blithe creatures were full of frolic and fun, and the light Gallic tongue seemed strangely

[6] The church of the Immaculate Conception, the first permanent structure of its kind west of the Alleghany Mountains, was built in 1720. It was torn down in 1838 and a large brick church built. For a more detailed description of the former, see *post*, pp. 62–64.— Ed.

musical from those bright lips. But enough — enough of my evening's ramble — nay, more than enough: I am waxing sentimental. It was at a late hour, after encountering divers untold adventures, that I found myself once more at my hotel. The gallery was thronged with French gentlemen, and it was some hours before the laugh and chatter had died away, and the old village was buried in slumber.

Kaskaskia, Ill.

XXXV

"Glanced many a light caïque along the foam,
Danced on the shore the daughters of the land."
BYRON.

"How changed the scene since merry Jean Baptiste
Paddled his pirouge on La Belle Rivière,
And from its banks some lone Loyola priest
Echoed the night song of the voyageur."

IT is now more than a century and a half since the sturdy Canadian voyageurs, treading in the footsteps of the adventurous Sieur la Salle, forsaking the bleak shores and wintry skies of the St. Lawrence, first planted themselves upon the beautiful hunting-grounds of the peaceful Illini. Long before the Pilgrim Fathers of New-England, or the distressed exiles of Jamestown, scattered along the steril shores of the Atlantic, had formed even a conception of the beautiful valley beyond the mountains — while this vast North American continent was yet but a wilderness, and the nations of Christendom, ignorant of its character or of its extent, knew not by whom of right it should be appropriated — a few French Jesuit priests had ascended in their bark canoes a distance of three thousand miles from the mouth of the "endless river," and had explored its tributaries to their fountains. It is with admiration

almost bordering on astonishment that we view the bold adventures of these daring men.[7] [145] The cause of their fearless undertaking was, we are told, to investigate the truth of an idea which at that era was prevalent among the Canadian French, that a western passage through the American continent existed to the Pacific Ocean. The Indian hunters had spoken of a vast stream far away to the west, which on their long excursions they had seen, but of whose source, course, or termination they could tell nothing. This river was supposed to disgorge itself into the Pacific Seas; and, to prosecute the inquiry, Father Marquette, a recollet monk, and Sieur Joliet, an Indian trader of Quebec, by authority of M. Talon, Intendant of New France, a man of singular enterprise, entered upon the expedition. Thridding the great chain of the Northern Lakes in their slender skiffs, and pursuing the Ouisconsin River, on the 17th of June, 1673, the first Europeans descended the "Father of Waters."[8] By the natives whom they met they were kindly received, and entertained with a deference due only to superior beings. Among these Indians, the Illini, then residing on both sides of the Mississippi, were chief, and their nation was made up of seven distinct tribes: the Miamies, Michigamies, Mascotins, Kaskaskias, Kahokias, Peorias, and Taumarwaus, a peaceful, benevolent, unwarlike race.[9] A village was found at the mouth of the Illinois. Descending the Mississippi, the French voyageurs were dissuaded from their design of exploring the Missouri by a tradition of the natives that

[7] Hall.— FLAGG.

[8] Jacques Marquette was a Jesuit missionary, not a Recollect. Consult R. G. Thwaites, *Father Marquette* (New York, 1902). On Jolliet see Francis Parkman, *La Salle* (Boston, 1869); and the latest authority, Ernest Gagnon, *Louis Jolliet* (Quebec, 1902).— ED.

[9] For a short note on the Illinois Indians, consult our volume xxvi, p. 123, note 86.— ED.

near its mouth dwelt a *Manito*, whose residence no human being could pass with life: nor did the Indians fail to tell the legend of [146] the *Piasa* cliff above. Turning up the Illinois, therefore, they glided with amazement through the green woodlands and over the silvery wave of that beautiful stream. It is, perhaps, at this distant day, and in the present era of "speculators and economists," hardly possible to conceive the delighted emotions which must then have swelled the bosoms of those simple-hearted men. Sieur Joliet, on his return to Canada, published an account of his adventures, in which narrative language seems almost too meager for description of the golden land he had seen.[10] Father Marquette remained a missionary among the peaceful Indians. To the river partially explored was given the name of the celebrated Colbert, Minister of Marine, by Count de Frontenac; and to the trader Joliet, as a reward, was granted the island of Anticosti in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.[11]

Years passed away, and no enterprising spirit rose up to prosecute the discoveries already made. The missionary Marquette died among the Indians two years after, and Joliet took possession of his island. At length appears M. Robert, Cavalier de la Salle, a native of Rouen in Normandy, celebrated as the birthplace of Fontenelle and the two Corneilles, and for the martyrdom of the heroic Maid of Orleans more than two centuries before. La

[10] Flagg errs in saying that Jolliet published an account of his adventures. His journal was lost in the St. Lawrence River on the return journey. Father Marquette, however, wrote a journal of his travels. See Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations*, lix, which also contains Jolliet's map of North America (1674).— Ed.

[11] The Island of Anticosti, in the estuary of St. Lawrence River, contains about 3,900 square miles, and is not only of importance as a centre of hunting and fishing interests, but is rich in undeveloped mineral resources. The population of a few hundred souls is chiefly concerned in fishing. The island is now the property of M. Henri Menier, a Parisian chocolate manufacturer, who personally rules his seigniory with benevolent despotism.— Ed.

Salle was a man of bold talents and dauntless enterprise. Ambitious of fame and wealth, he emigrated to Canada; listened to the wonderful tales of the *endless river*; conceived the idea of a Northwest Passage to the East Indies; communicated his views to the commandant of Fort Frontenac on Lake Ontario, [147] and was advised to lay his plan before the Court of St. Cloud. On his arrival at Paris, under the patronage of the Prince de Conti, La Salle received letters of nobility and extensive grants of land in America. Associating with himself the Chevalier de Tonti, an Italian officer, who had the peculiarity of a copper hand as substitute to one lost in the wars of Sicily, and Father Lewis Hennepin, a Franciscan friar, as historian and missionary, together with about thirty others, the enterprise was immediately entered upon, under special sanction of Louis XIV., king of France. After a variety of fortune, prosperous and adverse, they reached the Illinois, and having descended that beautiful river some distance, discovered an Indian village consisting of five hundred cabins completely deserted. Here, having found a large quantity of corn concealed in the earth under each of the wigwams, the party remained six days. Descending ninety miles, they came to Peoria Lake, where they found two encampments of the natives. At first hostility was manifested, but soon they were on most amicable terms with the voyageurs, and a feasting, and dancing, and rejoicing was kept up for three days. Not long after this the boat containing supplies was lost upon "*Le Baie des Puants*," or Green Bay; and La Salle was forced to erect a fort, which received the appropriate name of "*Creve Cœur*" — broken heart. The site of this fortification is supposed to have been a spot now called "Spring Bay," not far from Peoria, on the Illinois. This is a singular place. It is a broad sand basin, some hundred feet [148]

in diameter, opening upon the river, the waters of which, in the higher stages, fill it to the brim, but when low they retire, and a number of large springs gush copiously forth from three sides of the ridge, and form a stream. "Blue Creek" empties itself just below, crossed by a bridge of earth, while yet farther down is seen a large mound, which has been opened, and found to contain human remains twenty feet from the summit.[12]

At the time of the erection of Fort *Creve Cœur* the Illini were at war with the warlike Iroquois Indians; and the former, anticipating assistance from their friends the French, and receiving none, resolved to destroy La Salle. His boldness and eloquence alone saved him and restored amity. No sooner was this disturbance quelled than a mutiny arose among his own men. On Christmas-day his dinner was poisoned, and powerful medicine alone saved his life.

Preparations were now made to explore the Mississippi. Father Hennepin, with four Frenchmen, two Indians, and M. Dacan, commander, ascended the river to the falls, and named them, in honour of their patron saint, *St. Anthony.* They were here taken prisoners by a party of Sioux, carried one hundred and sixty miles into the interior to their villages, and detained several months, when they regained their liberty. Father Hennepin returned to Canada, and subsequently to France, where he published his travels in splendid style, dedicating the book to the celebrated Colbert. These early writings, though deeply imbued with a spirit of superstition [149] and exaggeration, are yet valuable as the *only* records of the time.[13] The chief

[12] Concerning La Salle's discoveries, see Ogden's *Letters from the West*, in our volume xix, pp. 44-53, and accompanying notes.— Ed.

[13] Concerning Hennepin's expedition from Crêvecœur to the Falls of St. Anthony, Flagg is in error. Hennepin was accompanied by two Frenchmen, Michel Accault and Antoine Auguel, and probably went merely as their spiritual

of these historians were Hennepin, Tonti, and Charlevoix.[14] Difficulties arising with the Indians, La Salle resolved to erect another fort, which, after infinite difficulty, was completed. The site is described as "a rock, very high, the top of which was even and of convenient space, so that it commanded the river and country round about." This description applies to no place on the Illinois so well as to the "Starved Rock." The fort was called "St. Louis."

La Salle visited Canada, and a crowd of adventurers returned with him. Descending the Illinois and Mississippi, the company stopped for some time at the mouth of the Missouri, then the *Osage* River, and found a village of the Taumarwaus, which was deserted, the natives being on a hunting expedition. In three days they were at the *Oubachi* or Ohio. At the Chicasaw Bluffs a fort called *Prudhomme* was erected, and formal possession of the country first taken, and, in honour of the reigning monarch,

companion. His publications were: *Description de la Louisiane* (Paris, 1683); *Nouvelle Découverte d'un tres grand Pays Situé dans l'Amérique* (Utrecht, 1697); *Nouveau Voyage d'un Pais plus grand que l'Europe* (Utrecht, 1698). The first was dedicated to Louis XIV, the last two to William III, king of England. For bibliography of Hennepin, see Victor Hugo Paltsits, "Bibliographical Data," in Thwaites, *Hennepin's New Discovery* (Chicago, 1903), pp. xlv-lxiv.— Ed.

[14] M. Tonti, among other writers, speaking of the country, according to Mr. Peck's translation, says:

"The soil is, generally speaking, so fertile, that it produces naturally, without culture, those fruits that nature and art together have much ado to bring forth in Europe. They have two crops every year without any great fatigue. The vines bring extraordinary grapes, without the care of the husbandman, and the fruit-trees need no gardeners to look after them. The air is everywhere temperate. The country is watered with navigable rivers, and delicious brooks and rivulets. It is stocked with all sorts of beasts, as bulls, *orignacs*, wolves, lions, wild asses, stags, goats, sheep, foxes, hares, beavers, otters, dogs, and all sorts of fowl, which afford a plentiful game for the inhabitants."

In another place, this writer gives an amusing account of hunting "wild bulls," which "go always by droves of three or four hundred each." This description answers well for the buffalo, but it is not so easy to determine what animals they mistook for "wild asses, goats, and sheep."

Passing down the Mississippi, Tonti mentions the same animals, and describes the forest-trees with tolerable accuracy, had he not added, "one sees there whole

named *Louisiana*. Several other forts were erected, and one of them, the ruins of which yet remain, is supposed to have stood between St. Louis and Carondelet. Descending the river on the 7th of April, 1683, La Salle reached the Gulf of Mexico, where a *Te Deum* was sung; a cross, with the arms of France, was suspended from the summit of a lofty tree; and the river, which had occupied three months in its exploration of about one thousand miles, was named "St. [150] Louis." On his return, the associates of La Salle founded the villages of Kaskaskia and Cahokia on the American Bottom, while he hastened on to Canada and thence to France, to obtain a colony for the country at the mouth of the Mississippi. Losing his route on returning with this expedition, he commenced a journey over land to Illinois; but, while on his way, was treacherously assassinated by two of his followers.[15] It is a remarkable fact in the history of retributive justice,

---

plains covered with pomegranate-trees, orange-trees, and lemon-trees; and, in one word, with all kinds of fruit-trees." Goats are frequently mentioned by different writers. Hennepin, while narrating the account of an embassy from Fort Frontenac to the Iroquois nation, and the reception the party met with, says: "The younger savages washed our feet, and rubbed them with grease of deer, *wild goats*, and oil of bears." When upset in their boat and cast on the western shore of Lake Michigan, an Indian of their company "killed several stags and wild goats."

Wild goats are named so frequently, and in so many connexions, as hardly to admit of an intentional misrepresentation.— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. For sketches of Charlevoix and Tonty, see Nuttall's *Journal*, in our volume xiii, pp. 116 and 117, notes 81 and 85 respectively.

[15] For a recent work on La Salle, consult P. Chesnel, *Histoire de Cavelier de La Salle* (Paris, 1901). With the exception of Crêvecœur, Prudhomme, and St. Louis, we have no definite proof that La Salle established any other forts in the Mississippi Valley. He erected a monument at the mouth of the Mississippi on April 9, 1682, on taking possession of the country in the name of Louis XIV. Kaskaskia and Cahokia were not founded by the associates of La Salle on the latter's return. For historical sketches of these towns, see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 69, note 132, and p. 70, note 135, respectively. La Salle was assassinated March 19, 1687, on a branch of the Trinity River, in the present state of Texas.— ED.

that these men soon after dealt death to each other; and two priests of the mutineers became penitent, and confessed all the circumstances of the crime. The burial spot of the noble La Salle is unknown to this day. Marquette, "the apostle of the wilderness," died under circumstances of touching interest on the lonely shores of Lake Michigan while upon his mission. Charlevoix, the historian, throws an interest of melancholy romance over the fate of this venerable man. According to this writer, Father Joseph Marquette was a native of Laon, in Picardy, and of distinguished family. About two years after his discovery of the Mississippi, while engaged in his missionary labours among the savages, he was journeying from Chicago to Michillimackinac, and on the 8th of May, 1675, entered the mouth of a small river emptying into Lake Michigan upon its eastern side, which now bears his name. Here he landed, erected an altar, and said mass. After this ceremony he retired a short distance, and requested the two voyageurs who conducted his canoe to leave him alone for half an hour, while in private [151] he returned thanks. The period having expired, they went to seek him, and found him dead in the attitude of devotion:[16] the circumstance then recurred to them, that, on entering the river, he had dropped an intimation that he should there end his days. The distance was too great to Michillimackinac to convey there his remains, and the voyageurs accordingly buried them near the bank of the stream, which they called by his name. From that time the river, as if from reverence for the missionary's relics, has continued to retire, and his grave is yet pointed out to the traveller. Thus did the venerable Marquette, at an advanced age, alone with his God, yield up his blameless life to its giver, while

[16] Father Marquette died May 18, 1675, on the present site of Ludington, Michigan.— Ed.

engaged in his holy errand of peace to the savage, and amid the magnificent solitudes of the land of his discovery.

Subsequent to these explorations, colonies from Lower Canada rapidly settled the recent villages of Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Peoria.[17] But their designs seem not to have been those of the speculators of our own day. Their sole anticipation was to amass opulence by mining in a country then supposed incalculably rich in the precious metals, from its resemblance to the silver region of South America; and we find exclusive grants of extensive tracts bearing this date to Cruzat, Renault, and other individuals.[18] In pursuit of this golden chimera, many expeditions were fitted out at vast expense. In 1699 M. de Seur, an enterprising traveller, with ninety men, descended the Mississippi to a spot six hundred miles above the Illinois, and erected a fort [152] upon the present site of Fort Armstrong for the purpose of exploring a mine of *terre verte*, said to

[17] For the settlement of Peoria, see our volume xxvi, p. 133, note 93.— Ed.

[18] Owing to the exhaustion of France following the War of the Spanish Succession, Louis XIV, determined to develop the resources of the vast Louisiana territory, granted (September 14, 1712) to Antoine Crozat, a wealthy merchant, the exclusive right of trade in Louisiana for a term of fifteen years. Among other privileges, Crozat was permitted to send one ship a year to Africa for a cargo of negroes; to possess and operate all mines of precious metals in the territory, on the condition that a fourth of the metal be turned over to the king; and to possess in perpetuity all buildings and manufactories erected by him in the colony. On the other hand, Crozat was obliged to import two shiploads of colonists each year, and after nine years to assume all the expenses of the government. In the meantime the king was to furnish fifty thousand livres annually. Crozat did all in his power to develop the resources of the country; but owing to discord among the subordinate officials, in despair he surrendered the charter to the prince regent (August 13, 1717). See Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1903). After Crozat's surrender, Louisiana territory was turned over to the Mississippi (or Western) Company, directed by John Law; see *post*, p. 49, note 28. Philip François Renault was made the principal agent for a French company, whose purpose was the development of the mines of the territory. In 1719 he sailed from France with more than two hundred mechanics, stopped at the West Indies, and secured a cargo of five hundred negro slaves, and in due course arrived at Fort Chartres in the Illinois (1721). Large grants of land for mining purposes were made to Renault — an extensive tract west of the Mississippi River; another,

have been discovered in that beautiful region.[19] It need hardly be said that all these adventurers were disappointed: but the buoyant hilarity of the race did not forsake them, and as boatmen, hunters, *couriers du bois*, Indian traders, and small farmers,[20] they gained a comfortable subsistence, and merrily did they enjoy it. Most of their lives were passed upon the broad prairies, and in penetrating every section of this vast valley in their birch pirogues wherever a stream presented to them its bosom; and yet with the violin, the grape-juice, and a short pipe, they seemed the blithest mortals on the face of the earth. It was by men such as these that the village of Kaskaskia, in old French chronicles styled "*Notre dame de Cascasquias*," originating in the name and residence of an Indian tribe, first was

---

fifteen leagues square, near the site of Peoria; and still another above Fort Chartres, one league along the river and two leagues deep. He founded St. Philippe, near the fort, and built what was probably the first smelting furnace in the Mississippi Valley. In 1743 he returned to France, where he died.— ED.

[19] Pierre Charles le Sueur went to Canada when a young man, and engaged in the fur-trade. In 1693, while commandant at Chequamegon, he erected two forts — one on Madelaine Island, in Chequamegon Bay (Lake Superior), and another on an island in the Mississippi, near Red Wing, Minnesota. Later he discovered lead mines along the upper Mississippi. In 1699 he returned from a visit to France, and under Iberville's directions searched for copper mines in the Sioux country, where Le Sueur had earlier found green earth. Le Sueur reached the mouth of Missouri River (July 13, 1700) with nineteen men, according to Bénard de la Harpe's manuscript, compiled from Le Sueur's Journal — with twenty-nine men, as related by Pénicaut, a member of the expedition. The company was later increased to perhaps thirty or forty, but not ninety, as Flagg says. Le Sueur ascended the Mississippi, and its tributary the Minnesota, and erected a fort in August, 1700, one league above the point where the Blue Earth River (St. Peter's River, until 1852) empties into the Minnesota. This fort he named l'Huillier, in honor of his patron in France. Flagg has confused this site with that of Fort Armstrong at Rock Island, Illinois. In May, 1701, Le Sueur left the fort in care of d'Eraque, who remained in charge until 1703, when he abandoned the place. For extracts from original documents relating to Le Sueur's activities, consult: "Le Sueur's Mines on the Mississippi," "Le Sueur's Voyage up the Mississippi," and "Le Sueur's Fort on the Mississippi," in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, xvi, pp. 173, 174, 177-200.— ED.

[20] "*Petits paysans.*"— FLAGG.

settled; and in a few years it had become an extensive depôt for the trade in furs. It was probably by the same Indian tribe which originally possessed the site of Kaskaskia that a party of the unfortunate expedition of Ferdinand de Soto, by whom Florida was partially conquered, was almost destroyed about the year 1539. Indeed, there was a tradition still extant upon the arrival of the French, of their having exterminated the first *white faces* they had ever seen. For three years did the chivalrous De Soto, with his nine hundred steel-clad warriors, scour the land in search of the reality of his golden dreams: at length he died; he was an object of hatred and terror to the Indians; and to conceal his death, or to [153] preserve from violation his remains, his followers enclosed them in a coffin constructed from the section of a hollow tree, and sunk them beneath the floods of the *eternal river*. His followers, reduced to only two hundred and fifty, returned to Spain. And so the burial-places of the first explorers of the Mississippi are unknown.[21]

The extent of the territory of Kaskaskia was originally very great, stretching from the Kaskaskia River to the Mississippi, a breadth of about two miles, and comprising the area from the confluence of the streams, seven miles below, to the present site of the place. The tract below the town is incalculably fertile, abounding in the

[21] The battle of Mauilla, to which Flagg is referring, was fought in October, 1540, between De Soto's men and the Mobilian Indians, near the present site of Mobile. Our author is mistaken in supposing that these Indians were the Kaskaskia. De Soto reached the Mississippi in May, 1541, and died May 21, 1542. He started on the expedition with less than seven hundred men, instead of one thousand. According to Herrera, his body was laid in a hollow live-oak log, and lowered into the Mississippi; but it seems more probable that the corpse was wrapped in mantles made heavy by a ballast of sand, and thus lowered into the water. See John G. Shea, "Ancient Florida," in Justin Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America* (Boston and New York, 1886), ii, pp. 231-283; also E. G. Bourne (ed.) *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto* (New York, 1904).— Ed.

plum, the persimmon, the cherry, the delicate *pecan*, the hickory, and the hazel-nut; and for the most part was comprised in one vast "common field," over which herds of wild horses, introduced by the emigrants, long roamed in undisturbed possession. This *common*, consisting of seven thousand acres, was granted "to Kaskaskia and inhabitants for ever" by Vaudreuil, governor of the Province of Louisiana, as early as 1743.[22] In this arrangement we observe a striking feature in the policy both of the French and Spanish governments, in their early settlements on the Mississippi. The items of door-yards, gardens, stable-yards, etc., and of settling colonies in the compact form of towns and villages, as a protection from the savages and to promote social intercourse, were all matters of special requisition and enactment; while to each [154] settlement was granted two tracts of land for "*common fields*" and "*commons*." This distinction was not, however, invariably observed. The former consisted of several hundred acres, conveniently divided among the individual families, and the whole enclosed by the labour of all the villagers

[22] Annexed is a copy of the grant of the celebrated *commons* attached to the village of Kaskaskia. It is the earliest title the citizens hold to seven thousand acres of the most fertile land in the West — perhaps in the world.

"Pierre de Rigault de Vaudreuil, Governor and Edme Gatien Salmon Commissary orderer of the Province of Louisiana, seen the petition to us presented on the sixteenth day of June of this present year by the Inhabitants of the Parish of the Immaculate Conception of Kaskaskia dependence of the Illinois, tending to be confirmed in the possession of a common which they have had a long time for the pasturage of their cattle in the Point called *La point de bois*, which runs to the entrance of the River Kaskaskia. We, by virtue of the power to us granted by his Majesty have confirmed and do confirm to the said Inhabitants the possession of the said common on the following conditions —

"First, That the concessions heretofore granted either by the India Company either by our predecessors or by us in the prairie of Kaskaskia on the side of the point which runs to the entrance of the river, shall terminate at the land granted to a man named *Cavalier*, and in consequence, that all concessions that may have been made on the said point from the land of the said Cavalier forward, on the side of the entrance of the said river shall be null and void and of no effect. In consequence of which, the said Point, as it is above designated, shall remain

in common. If the enclosure opposite any plat was suffered to become ruinous, the right to the common was forfeited by the offending individual. The seasons, also, for ploughing, sowing, reaping, etc., were by public ordinance simultaneous: yet with these restrictions, each individual, so long as he complied with the necessary regulations, possessed his lot in *franc allieu* — fee simple, subject to sale and transfer. The "*common*" was a far more extended tract, embracing in some instances several thousand acres without enclosure, and reserved for the purpose of wood and pasturage. Here there was no grant of severalty, and no individual portion could be appropriated without the special and unanimous consent of the whole village. To the indigent who came to settle among them, and to young married pairs, donations from this tract were often made by the villagers, and, if conveniently situated, might

---

in common without altering its nature, nevertheless, reserving to us the power whenever the case may require it, of granting the said commons to the inhabitants established and who may establish, and this, on the representations which may be made to us by the commandants and sub-delegates in the said places.

"Secondly, on the road vulgarly called the *Square Line* between the large and small line shall be rendered practicable and maintained for the passage of the Carts and Cattle going into the Common, and this by lack of the proprietors as well of the great as of the small line whose lands border on the roads of the *Square line*. And as to the places which ought to run along the side of the village from the said road of the Square line unto the river, as also the one on the side of the point running to the Mississippi and to the Kaskaskia river, they shall be made and maintained at the expense of the community, to the end that the cultivated lands be not injured by the cattle.

"Thirdly, To facilitate to the inhabitants the means of making their autumnal harvest, and prevent its being damaged by the cattle, we forbid all persons to leave their cattle range upon cultivated lands — they are, notwithstanding, permitted to graze upon their own proper lands on having them diligently watched.

"Fourthly, Willing that the wood which is on the land granted belong to the proprietors of the said lands, we forbid all persons to cut down any elsewhere than on their own lands, and as to the wood which may be found in the commons to cut down for their own use, either for building or for fire wood, and this shall be the present regulation.

"Read, published and affixed to the end that no person may be ignorant thereof. Given at New-Orleans the fourteenth day of August, 1743. VAUDREUIL.

"SALMON."— FLAGG.

subsequently become a portion of the "*common field.*" [23] That such an arrangement, under all the circumstances of the period when instituted, and with such a people as the early French settlers, was the best that could have been made, no one can doubt. But how such a regulation would suit a race of *enterprising* Yankees, fidgeting eternally for *improvements*, or a squad of long-sided Kentuckians, grumbling about elbow-room, is problematical.

[155] The proceedings of our national government towards these ancient villages have been characterized by generosity, whatever may be said of the conduct of individuals. In 1788, an extensive tract lying along the Mississippi was by act of Congress granted to the French inhabitants east of that river; and to those of Kaskaskia was secured for a common field twenty thousand acres. It is under direction of the trustees of the town by provision of the state legislature.[24]

Unlike the policy of all other Europeans who have planted themselves upon the Western continent, that of the French emigrants towards the aborigines, with the single exception of the extermination of the Natchez in the South, has invariably been conciliatory, peaceable, and friendly.[25]

---

[23] "Under the old management all the inhabitants had equal access to the commons for pasturage and fuel. By an act of the legislature passed in 1854, the citizens were authorized to elect five trustees every two years, who should exercise the charge of the commons, lease portions thereof, and apply the proceeds to church and school purposes only. The common fields were also originally owned jointly by the villagers, though each resident was assigned an individual portion. The United States commissioners, in 1809, determined the rights of each citizen, and the lots have since been held in fee simple." See *Combined History of Randolph, Monroe, and Perry Counties, Illinois* (Philadelphia, 1883), p. 308.— Ed.

[24] For the memorial of George Morgan, upon these lands along the Mississippi River, the report of the committee to which the above had been referred, and the resolutions of Congress thereon (August 28, 29, 1788), see *Laws of the United States, etc.* (Bioren edition, Philadelphia, 1815), i, pp. 580-585.— Ed.

[25] For an account of the extermination of the Natchez, see F. A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 254, note 53.— Ed.

This has been the effect rather of debasing themselves than of elevating the natives. Surrounded by everything which could fascinate the eye or delight the fancy, we find these inoffensive foreigners, therefore, unlike the English settlers along the Atlantic and in the elder Western states, at peace with all their savage neighbours; unambitious, contented, and happy, increasing and flourishing; and in a few years, they tell us, Kaskaskia, "the terrestrial paradise," numbered a population of eight thousand souls![26] Blessed with a soil of boundless fertility, and prolific in all Nature's luxurious stores to a degree of which less-favoured climes can form no conception: subsisting solely by culture of the little homesteads around their own thresholds, by hunting [156] the wild denizens of their noble forests, or angling upon the calm bosom of their beautiful stream: simple-hearted and peaceful, almost without the *terms* of law, gently ruled by the restraints of a religion they venerated and a priesthood they loved: without commerce, the arts, or the elegances of life; a thousand miles from a community of civilized men; from year to year they went on, and from generation to generation they flourished, until, in that of our own age and our own day, they are found still treading in the steps in which their fathers trod! So long as the peaceful French villager retained the beautiful land of his adoption in undisputed possession, all was flourishing and prosperous. A little more than half a century from its origin, Kaskaskia was capital of Illinois; and on the visit of Charlevoix in 1721, a monastery and Jesuit college was in successful operation, the ruins of the edifice remaining extant even at the

[26] Doubtless an exaggeration.— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. "From 1810 to 1820 the town (Kaskaskia) probably contained more people than at any other period of its history. A census taken at that time showed a population of seven thousand." See *History of Randolph, Monroe, and Perry Counties*, p. 307.

present day.[27] This institution was successful in converting a number of the aborigines to its peculiar tenets, and at one period *is said* to have "embraced twenty-five hundred catechumens ! !" A most preposterous assertion, most assuredly.

It was in the early part of this century that the scheme of that celebrated projector, John Law, of Edinburgh, on the strength of which he elevated himself to the dignity of Comptroller-general of the Finance of France, was first set on foot with reference to the Valley of the Mississippi. The design, so far as it is now known, was to establish a bank, an East India, and a Mississippi Company, from [157] the anticipated enormous revenue of which was to be liquidated the national debt of France.[28] The territory of Louisiana had already acquired a reputation abroad for the boundlessness of the wealth and fertility of its soil; and, to foster the delusion of Law's scheme, descriptions of this beautiful region, tinted with all the rainbow hues of romance, were scattered throughout Europe, until the distant wilderness of *les Illinois* became the paradise of the slumberer's vision. "The Illinois" was the fairy-land of fancy realized. A few years, the vast fabric of fictitious credit crumbled, almost annihilating the finance of France, and burying thousands of families in its ruins.

---

[27] A monastery and accompanying college, liberally endowed from Europe, was founded at Kaskaskia by Jesuit missionaries in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.— ED.

[28] "The idea," says Adam Smith, "of the possibility of multiplying paper money to almost any extent, was the real foundation of what is called the *Mississippi scheme*, the most extravagant project, both of banking and stock-jobbing, that perhaps the world ever saw."— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. John Law died at Venice, March 21, 1729. Concerning his financial methods, see Émile Levasseur, *Recherches historique sur le system de Law* (Paris, 1854). Ample and accurate is Andrew M. Davis's *A Historical Study of Law's System* (Boston, 1887), reprinted from *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (Boston, 1887), i, pp. 289-318, 420-452.

Law was exiled and retired to Venice, where in poverty he soon died. It is a coincidence not a little remarkable, that the same year, 1720, witnessed the same desperate game enacted by the South Sea directors in England. But the attention of France was now directed towards her remote colony in North America; and notwithstanding the failure of Law's scheme, old Kaskaskia continued to flourish beyond all compare. Other villages sprang into existence around; a lucrative fur-trade was carried on by the Canadian voyageurs, and agriculture became the peculiar province of the French villager. The extent and luxuriance of the agriculture at this period may be [158] gathered from the fact, that in the single year 1746, eight hundred thousand weight of flour was sent to New Orleans from these settlements.[29] At this period there was not a solitary village west of the Mississippi, though the lead-mines then known and worked were resorted to by traders.[30] Twenty years after the failure of Law's scheme, the French government formed the design, almost as chimerical, of securing her immense possessions in the Mississippi Valley by a continuous line of military posts, connecting them with Canada; and vast were the sums of money expended in the undertaking.

A century, and the whole region was ceded to England, thence to our own government in 1783, and now old Kaskaskia is but the wreck of its former prosperity. It makes one almost sad to wander about among these ruinous, deserted habitations, venerable with departed years, and reflect that once they were thronged with population, the seat of hospitality, and the home of kindly feeling. The quiet villagers have been not a little annoyed by the steady

[29] Breckenridge.— FLAGG.

[30] For an account of the early lead-mines, see Flagg's *Far West*, in our volume xxvi, p. 95, note 60.— ED.

and rapid influx of immigration on every side of them, dissimilar in customs, language, religion, and temperament, while the bustling enterprise has fretted and displeased them. Long accustomed, also, to the arbitrary but parental authority of their military commandants and priesthood, they deemed the introduction of the common law among them exceedingly burdensome, and the duties of a citizen of a republic, of which we are so [159] proud, intolerable drudgery. Many, therefore, of the wealthy and respectable, on cession of their territory to our government, removed to Louisiana, where civil law yet bears sway; others crossed the river and established Ste. Genevieve and St. Louis;[31] while the foreigners returning to the lands from which they had emigrated, few but natives of the country remained behind. The ordinance of 1787,[32] prohibiting involuntary servitude in the region then called the Northwestern Territory, induced many who were desirous of preserving their blacks to remove to the new villages west of the Mississippi, then under Spanish rule. From these and a variety of similar causes, this peaceful, kind-hearted people have within the last thirty years been more than once disturbed in the dwellings of their fathers.

Kaskaskia, Ill.

---

[31] For an historical sketch of Ste. Genevieve, see Cuming's *Tour*, in our volume iv, p. 266, note 174.— Ed.

[32] The French civil law still prevails in Louisiana.

For a good monograph on the Ordinance of 1787, and the text of the same, see Jay Amos Barrett, *Evolution of the Ordinance of 1787, with an Account of the earlie Plans for the Government of the Northwest Territory* (New York, 1891).— Ed.

XXXVI

" If my readers should at any time remark that I am particularly dull, they may rest assured there is a design under it."— *British Essayist.*

" Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor."

GRAY'S *Elegy.*

FEW things are more difficult, and, consequently, more rarely met, than correct portraiture of character, whether of the individual or of a community. It is easy enough, indeed, to trace out the prominent outlines in the picture; and with a degree of accuracy which shall render it easily recognised, while yet the more delicate shading and lighting is false; just as the artist may have transferred every feature in exact form, size, and proportion to his canvass, while the expression thrown over the whole may be incorrect. This has more than once been the case in descriptions hastily drawn of that singular being, *the French villager of the Mississippi.* One distinguished writer has given an absolute caricature of the race. My own design has been, therefore, merely to throw before the reader those characteristic traits which not even the most careless observer could have failed to detect.

[161] Though betraying but little of that fiery restlessness which distinguishes the Parisian, these men are yet Frenchmen in more respects than mere origin. In their ordinary deportment we view, indeed, rather the calm gravity, the saturnine severity of the Spaniard; and yet in their *fêtes* and amusements, which were formerly far more frequent than at present, they exhibit all the gayety of the native of La Belle France. The calm, quiet tenour of their lives presenting but few objects for enterprise,

none for the strivings of ambition, and but little occasion of any kind to elicit the loftier energies of our nature, has imparted to their character, their feelings, their manners, to the very language they speak, a languid softness strongly contrasted by the unquiet restlessness of the emigrant who is succeeding them. Hospitality was formerly, with them, hardly a virtue: it was a matter of course, arising from their peculiarity of situation; and the swinging sign of the tavern is a recent usurpation. The statute-book, the judiciary, courts of law, and the penitentiary, were things little recognised among these simple-hearted people; for where the inequalities of life were unknown, what was the inducement to crime demanding this enginery of punishment? Learning and science, too, were terms scarcely comprehended, their technicalities not at all; for schools were few, and *learned men* still more so; and thus reading, writing, and ciphering are, and ever have been, the acme of scholastic proficiency with the French villager. How many of the honest fellows can do even this, [162] is not for me to estimate. As to politics and the *affairs of the nation*, which their countrymen on the other side of the water ever seem to think no inconsiderable object of their being, they are too tame, and too lazy, and too quiet to think of the subject. Indeed, the worthy villagers very wisely look upon "earthly dignities" and the like much with the stoicism of Cardinal Wolsey in disgrace,

> "Oh, 'tis a burden, Cromwell, 'tis a burden,
> Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven."

The virtues of these people are said to be many: punctuality and honesty in their dealings; politeness and hospitality to strangers; though, it must be confessed, the manifold impositions practised upon their simplicity of late years has tended to substitute for the latter virtue

not a little of coolness and distrust. There is much friendship and warmth of feeling between neighbours and kindred, and the women make affectionate wives, though by no means prone to consider themselves in the light of goods and chattels of their liege-lords, as is not unfrequently the case in more enlightened communities. Indeed, as touching this matter, the Mississippi French villager invariably reverses the sage maxim of the poet,

"In things of moment on *yourself* depend;"

for he never presumes to depend upon any one but his faithful helpmate, whether things are of moment or not. As to religious faith, all are Catholics; and formerly, more than of late years, were punctilious in observance of the ceremony and discipline [163] of their church, permitting but few festivals of the calendar to pass unobserved. Their wealth consisted chiefly of personal property, slaves, merchandise, etc.; land being deemed an item of secondary consideration, while lead and peltry constituted the ordinary circulating medium. Rent for houses was a thing hardly known. All this changed long ago, of course; and while real estate has augmented in value many hundred per cent., personal property has somewhat proportionally depreciated.

In the ordinary avocations of the villagers, there is but little variety or distinction even at the present day, and formerly this uniformity of pursuit was yet more observable. The wealthier and more enterprising *habitans* were traders, often with peculiar and exclusive privileges; and they kept a heterogeneous stock of goods in the largest room of their dwelling-houses, by way of being merchants. There are but few who practice the mechanic arts for a livelihood: carpenters, smiths, tailors, shoemakers, etc., as *artisans*, were formerly almost unknown, and there

is now in this respect but little change. Now, as then, the mass of the population are agriculturists, while many of the young and enterprising men embrace with pride, as offering a broad field for generous emulation, the occupations of boatmen, traders to the Rocky Mountains — in the vicinity of which most of their lives are passed — *engagés* of the American Fur Company, or hunters and trappers upon the prairies. The bold recklessness of this class has long been notorious.

[164] The *idiom* of these villages, though by no means as pure as it might be, is yet much more so, all things considered, than could be expected. It requires no very close observation or proficiency in the language to detect a difference, especially in pronunciation, from the European French. There is not that nervous, animated *brilliancy* of dialect which distinguishes the latter; and the nasal, lengthened, drawling sound of words, gives their conversation a languid, though by no means a disagreeable movement. It is said to be more soft and euphonious than the vernacular, though very different from the Creole dialect of the West India Islands. There are some provincialisms, and some words which a century ago might have been recognized in some provinces of France, though not now.

As to the item of *costume*, it is still somewhat unique, though formerly, we are told, much more so: that of the men was a course blanket-coat, with a cap attached behind in lieu of a cape; and which, from the circumstance of drawing over the head, gave the garment the name of *capote*. Around the head was wreathed a blue handkerchief in place of a hat, and on the feet moccasins instead of shoes and stockings. All this, however, has pretty generally given place to the American garb, though some of the very aged villagers may still be seen in their ancient habiliments, the *capote*, moccasins, blue handkerchief on

the head, and an endless queue lengthened out behind. Their chief *amusement* ever has been, and, probably, ever will be, the DANCE, in which all, even from the least to the greatest, [165] bond and free, unite. Their *slaves* are treated well, if we may judge from appearances; for nowhere in the West have I seen a sleeker, fleshier, happier-looking set of mortals than the blacks of these old villages.

Previous to the cession of Louisiana to our government, the *Laws* of Spain were pretty generally in force throughout the province, so far as related to municipal arrangement and real estate, while the common law of France — *Coutume de Paris* — governed all contracts of a social nature, modified by and interwoven with the customs of the people.[33] Each district had its commandant, and each village its syndic, besides judges in civil affairs for the province, and officers of the *militia*, a small body of which was stationed in every district, though too inconsiderable to afford much protection to the inhabitants. These rulers were appointed by the governor at New-Orleans, to whom there was an appeal; and the lieutenant-governor, who resided at St. Louis, was commander of the troops. Thus the government was a mixture of civil and military; and, though arbitrary to the last degree, yet we are told the rod of domination was so slight as scarcely to be felt.[34] However this may be, it is pretty certain they did not well relish at first the change in the

[33] Under the feudal régime in France, the local or customary laws of the more important centres of population came gradually to extend their sway over larger and larger districts. With the rising importance of Paris, the *coutume de Paris* (common law of Paris), reformed in 1580 by order of the parliament, in time displaced all others; it breathed the national spirit. Codified, it was in a sense the forerunner of the Code Napoleon.— ED.

[34] Breckenridge — to whom the author is indebted for other facts relative to these early settlements.— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. Henry Marie Brackenridge (not Breckenridge), *Views of Louisiana* (Pittsburgh, 1814).

administration of justice when they came under the jurisdiction of our laws. The delay and uncertainty attendant on trial by jury, and the multifarious technicalities of our jurisprudence, they [166] could not well comprehend, either as to import, importance, or utility; and it is not strange they should have preferred the prompt despatch of arbitrary power. Nor is the modern administration of justice the *only* change with which the simple-hearted villager is dissatisfied. On every side of him *improvement*, the watchword of the age, is incessantly ringing in his ears; and if there be one term in all our vocabulary he abhors more than all others, it is this same: and, reader, there is much wisdom in his folly. In 1811 the invention of Fulton's mighty genius was first beheld walking upon the Western waters; and from that hour "the occupation" of the daring, reckless, chivalrous French voyageur "was gone." Again the spirit of improvement declared that the venerable old cottage, gray with a century's years, must give place to the style and material of a more modern date; and lo! the aged dwelling where his fathers lived, and where his eyes opened on the light, is swept away, and its very site is known no more. And then the streets and thoroughfares where his boyhood has frolicked, as the village increases to a city, must be widened, and straightened, and paved, and all for no earthly reason, to his comprehension, but to prevent familiar chat with his opposite neighbour, when sitting on his balcony of a long summer night, and to wear out his poor pony's unshodden hoofs! It is very true that their landed property, where they have managed to retain it from the iron grasp of speculation, has increased in value almost beyond calculation by the change; but they now refuse to [167] profit by selling. Merchandise, the comforts and luxuries of life, have become cheaper and more easily obtained, and the reward

of industrious enterprise is greater. But what is all this to men of their peculiar habits and feelings? Once they were far better contented, even in comparative poverty. There was then a harmony, and cordiality, and unanimity of feeling pervading their society which it never can know again. They were as one family in every village; nearly all were connected either by ties of affinity, consanguinity, propinquity, or friendship: distinction of rank or wealth was little known, and individuals of every class were dressed alike, and met upon equal and familiar footing in the same ballroom. It is needless to say, that now "*Nous avons changé tout cela.*" [35]

As to the poorer class of these villagers, it is more than doubtful whether they have *at all* been benefited by the change of the past twenty years. We must not forget that, as a race, they are peculiar in character, habits, and feeling; and so utterly distinct from ourselves, that they can with hardly more facility associate in customs with us than can our red brother of the prairie. Formerly the poorest, and the laziest, and the most reckless class was fearless of want or beggary; but now a more enterprising race has seized upon the lands with which they have imprudently parted, perhaps with little remuneration, and they find themselves abridged in many of their former immunities. Their cattle may no longer range at will, nor have they the liberty [168] of appropriating wood for fuel wherever it seemeth good. It cannot be denied, that many a one gains now a precarious subsistence, where formerly he would have lived in comfort. Nearly every one possesses a little cart, two or three diminutive ponies, a few cattle, a cottage, and garden. But in agriculture, the

[35] Sganarelle.— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. Sganarelle is a character in Molière's plays, notably in "Le Médicin malgré lui."

superior industry of the new immigrant can afford them for lease-rent double the result of their toil, while as draymen, labourers, or workmen of any kind, it is not difficult for foreigners to surpass them. In a few years the steamer will have driven the keel-boat from the Western waters, and with it the *voyageur*, the *patron*, and the *courier du bois*; but the occupation of the hunter, trapper, and *engagé*, in which the French villager can never be excelled, must continue so long as the American Fur Company find it profitable to deal in buffalo robes, or enterprising men think proper to go to Santa Fé for gold dust. Nor will the farmer, however lazy, lose the reward of his labour so long as the market of St. Louis is as little *over*stocked as at present. Nathless, it is pretty certain "*times ain't now as they used to was*" to the French villager, all this to the contrary notwithstanding.

Kaskaskia, Ill.

XXXVII

"All things have an end.
Churches and cities, that have diseases like to man,
Must have like death that we have."

"Birth has gladden'd it: Death has sanctified it."

"The roof-tree sinks, but moulders on the wall
In massy hoariness."

Childe Harold.

In remarking upon the history of the French in the West, and the peculiarities which still continue to characterize them, I am aware I have lingered longer than could have been anticipated; much longer, certainly, than was my original intention. The circumstances which have induced this delay have been somewhat various. The subject *itself* is an interesting one. Apart from the

delight we all experience in musing upon the events of bygone time, and that gratification, so singularly exquisite, of treading amid the scenes of "things departed," there is an interest which every individual who has cast his lot in the great Valley cannot fail to feel in every item, even the most minute, which may pertain to its history. In dwelling, too, upon the features of "old Kaskaskia," my design has been to exemplify the distinguishing characteristics of all these early settlements, both French and Spanish, in the Valley of the Mississippi. The peculiarities of all are the same, as were the circumstances [170] which first conduced to them. The same customs, the same religion, the same amusements, and the same form of government prevailed among all; and though dissimilar in dialect, and separated by the broad Mississippi, yet, cut off from all the rest of mankind, both the French and the Spanish villagers were glad to smother differences, and to bind themselves to each other in their dependant situation by the tendrils of mutually kind offices and social intercourse. Thus, several of the villages stand opposite each other upon the banks of the Mississippi. Ste. Genevieve is only across the stream from Kaskaskia, and many fine old traditionary legends of these early times are yet extant, and should be treasured up before too late.

But another circumstance which has been not unfavourable to that prolixity into which I have suffered my pen to glide, and without which other inducements might have proved ineffectual, has been the quiet, dreamy seclusion of this old hamlet, so congenial to the workings of the brain. Yesterday was like to-day, and to-morrow will be the transcript of yesterday; and so time's current slips lazily along, like

"The liquid lapse of a murmuring stream."

As to objects of interest, one could hardly have lingered

so long as I have within the precincts of this "sleepy hollow" without having met with some incidents worthy of regard for their *novelty*, if for naught else.

There are few situations in Illinois which can [171] boast advantages for mercantile transaction superior to Kaskaskia. But the villagers are not a commercial, enterprising, money-making people, and the trade of the place is, therefore, very small. The river is said to be navigable for fifty miles from its mouth; the current is gentle, and an inconsiderable expense in clearing the channel of fallen timber would enable small boats to penetrate nearly two hundred miles higher, by the meanderings of the stream, to Vandalia. Measures for this purpose have been entered upon. A land-office for the district is here established.[36] The number of families is seventy or eighty, nearly all French and all Catholics, besides considerable transient population — boatmen, hunters, trappers, who traverse the great rivers and broad prairies of the valley.

Opposite Kaskaskia, on the summit of a lofty crag overlooking the river, once stood a large fortress of massive timber, named Fort Gage. Its form was an oblong quadrangle, the exterior polygon being several hundred yards in circumference. It was burnt to the ground in 1766. About twelve years subsequent to this event, the place was taken by the American troops under Colonel George Rogers Clarke, "Hannibal of the West." After most incredible exertions in the march from Virginia, he arrived before Kaskaskia in the night; and, though fortified, so

[36] A land-office was established at Kaskaskia by act of Congress approved March 26, 1804, "for so much of the lands included within the boundaries fixed by the treaty of the thirteenth of August, one thousand eight hundred and three, with the Kaskaskia tribe of Indians, as is not claimed by any other Indian tribe;" this was discontinued by order of the president, November 12, 1855. The records were transferred to Springfield the following February.— ED.

bewildering was the surprise of the villagers, that not a blow was struck, and the town was taken.[37]

The aged Catholic church at Kaskaskia, among [172] other relics of the olden time, is well worthy a stranger's visit. It was erected more than a century since upon the ruins of a former structure of similar character, but is still in decent condition, and the only church in the place. It is a huge old pile, extremely awkward and ungainly, with its projecting eaves, its walls of hewn timber perpendicularly planted, and the interstices stuffed with mortar, with its quaint, oldfashioned spire, and its dark, storm-beaten casements. The interior of the edifice is somewhat imposing, notwithstanding the sombre hue of its walls; these are rudely plastered with lime, and decorated with a few dingy paintings. The floor is of loose, rough boards, and the ceiling arched with oaken panels. The altar and the lamp suspended above are very antique, I was informed by the officiating priest, having been used in the former church. The lamp is a singular specimen of superstition illustrated by the arts. But the structure of the *roof* is the most remarkable feature of this venerable edifice. This I discovered in a visit to the belfry of the tower, accomplished at no little expenditure of sinew and muscle, for stairs are an appliance quite unknown to this primitive building. There are frames of two distinct roofs, of massive workmanship, neatly united, compris-

[37] During the Indian troubles a fort was erected in 1736 on an eminence, later known as Garrison Hill, opposite Kaskaskia. It was repaired and occupied by a French garrison at the opening of the French and Indian War. In 1766 the fort was burned, but another soon afterward built, was occupied by the English (1772) and named Fort Gage, in honor of the British commander-in-chief. On the night of July 4, 1778, Colonel George Rogers Clark captured the fort and made it his headquarters while in Illinois. It was abandoned at the close of the Revolution, but was re-occupied for a short time by American troops in 1801. Colonel Pike's regiment was stationed there for a short period. See R. G. Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark Won the Northwest* (Chicago, 1903).— Ed.

ing a vast number of rafters, buttresses, and braces, crossing each other at every angle, and so ingeniously and accurately arranged by the architect, that it is mathematically impossible that any portion of the structure shall sink until time with a single blow shall level the entire [173] edifice.[38] It is related, that when this church was about being erected, the simple villagers, astonished at the immense quantities of timber required for the frame, called a meeting of the citizens, and for a time laid an interdict upon operations, until inquiry respecting the matter should be made. It was with difficulty the architect at length obtained permission to proceed; but, when all was completed, and the material had disappeared, they knew not where, their astonishment surpassed all bounds. The belfry reminded me of one of those ancient monuments of the Druids called *Rocking-stones*; for though it tottered to and fro beneath my weight, and always swings with the bell when it is struck, perhaps the united force of an hundred men could hardly hurl it from its seat. The bell is consecrated by the crucifix cast in its surface, and bears the inscription "*Pour Leglise des Illinois. Normand A. Parachelle*, 1741." The view from this elevation was extremely beautiful: the settlement scattered for miles around, with the quaint little cottages and farms all smiling in the merry sunlight, could hardly fail of the lovely and picturesque. [174] The churchyard attached to the building is not extensive, but crowded with tenants. It is into this receptacle that for four generations Kaskaskia

[38] The reader will recollect that these notes were sketched two years ago. Since that time some changes in this old edifice have taken place; the whole southwest angle has fallen to the ground, and, agreeable to the text, the entire roof would have followed but for the extraordinary strength of one solitary piece of timber. High mass was in celebration at the time, and the church was crowded, but no accident occurred. The old building has been since dismantled, however; its bell removed from the tower, and the whole structure will soon, probably, be prostrated by "decay's effacing finger."— FLAGG.

has poured her entire population. I saw but a few monuments and a pile of stones. The first record on the register belonging to this church is, I was informed by the priest, to the following effect, in French: "1741, *June* 7. *This morning were brought to the fort three bodies from without, killed by the Renards, to whom we gave sepulture.*" There is here also a baptismal record, embracing the genealogies of the French settlers since 1690, and other choice old chronicles.[39] Some land deeds still remain extant, bearing date as early as 1712, and a memorial also from the villagers to Louis XV., dated 1725, petitioning a grant of "*commons*," etc., in consequence of disasters from the flood of the preceding year, in which their all had been swept away, and they had been forced themselves to flee for life to the bluffs opposite the village.

The Nunnery at Kaskaskia is a large wooden structure, black with age, and formerly a public house. With this institution is connected a female seminary, in high repute throughout this region, and under superintendence of ten of the sisters. A new nunnery of stone is about being erected.[40]

It was a glorious morning, and, with many a lingering

---

[39] The earliest "extract from the baptismal records of the mission among the Illinois, under the title of the Immaculate conception of Our Lady," bears date March 20, 1692. The first ceremony recorded after the removal of the mission to Kaskaskia, was performed April 17, 1701. See "Kaskaskia Church Records," in Illinois State Historical Library *Publications* (Springfield, 1904), pp. 394-413; Edward G. Mason, "Kaskaskia and its Parish Records," in *Fergus Historical Series*, No. 12 (Chicago, 1881), pp. 1-22; C. W. Alvord, *The Old Kaskaskia Records* (Chicago Historical Society, 1906); *Magazine of American History*, vi, pp. 161-182; *Michigan Pioneer Collections*, v, pp. 94-109.— Ed.

[40] A convent of the Visitation was established at Kaskaskia in May, 1833, by a colony from the parent house at Georgetown, District of Columbia. It was patronized by Pierre Menard, and connected with the academy named in his honor. A large building was erected and opened for pupils in 1836. The institution enjoyed a high reputation until the flood of 1844 forced its abandonment. See *History of Randolph, Monroe, and Perry Counties*, p. 308.— Ed.

step, I left behind me the village of old Kaskaskia. As I rode leisurely along the banks of that placid stream, and among the beautiful farms of the French settlers, I was more than once reminded forcibly of similar scenery high up the Kennebeck, [175] in a distant section of Maine, known by the name of "*Indian Old Point*," where I once took a ramble with a college classmate during an autumn vacation. The landscape is one of singular beauty; yet, were it otherwise, there is a charm thrown around this distant and lonely spot by its association with an interesting passage in the earliest history of the country. In the expressive language of an eloquent writer, who has made the place the scene of an Indian tale, *the soil is fertilized by the blood of a murdered tribe*. Here, one hundred years ago, stood the village of the Norridgewocks, a tribe of the powerful Abnaquis, who then held undisputed domination over the extensive wilds of the far East. Though possessing not the fierce valour of the Pequods, the sinewy vigour of the Delawares, the serpent-like subtlety of the Penobscots, the bell-toned idiom of the Iroquois, we are yet told they were a powerful tribe for their intelligence and their numbers. The Jesuit missionaries of Canada, while at this era they were gliding upon the beautiful rivers of the distant West, had not neglected the steril rocks of the equally remote East: and the hamlet of the Norridgewocks had early been subjected to the influences of the fascinating ceremony and the lofty ritual of the Catholic faith. Under the guidance of the devoted Sebastian Rasle, a rude church was erected by the natives, and its gray, cross-crowned spire reared up itself among the low-roofed wigwams. Beloved by his savage flock, the venerable Father Rasle lived on in peacefulness and quietude for thirty years in the home of his adoption. During [176] the troubled period of the "French and Indian War"

which ensued, suspicions arose that the Norridgewocks were influenced by their missionary to many of their acts of lawless violence upon a village of English settlers but a few miles distant. In the autumn of 1724 this distrust had augmented to a conviction that the Abnaquis had resolved on the extermination of the white race, and a detachment of soldiers ascended the Kennebeck. It was a bright, beautiful morning of the Sabbath when they approached the Indian hamlet. The sweet-toned bell of the little chapel awoke the echoes with its clear peal, and announced the hour of mass just as the early sunlight was tinting the far-off hill-tops. A few moments, and every living soul in the village was within the church, and had bowed in humbleness before the "Great Spirit." The deep tones of the venerable Rasle were supplicating, "*Ora, ora pro nobis*," when the soldiers rushed in. Terrible and indiscriminate was the massacre that ensued. Not one was spared; not *one*! The pious Rasle poured out his heart's blood upon the altar of his devotion. Those of the natives who escaped from the chapel were either shot down or perished miserably in the river, their bark canoes having been previously perforated by the treachery of their foes.[41] The drowsy beams of that day's setting

[41] I give the tradition of the farmers now resident upon the spot. History differs somewhat.

Most of the historical facts relative to the extermination of the Abnaquis will be found condensed in the subjoined extract from a late valuable work.

"Determined on destroying this assemblage of Indians, which was the headquarters of the whole eastern country at this time, the English, in 1724, sent out a force, consisting of 208 men and three Mohawk Indians, under Captains *Moulton*, *Harman*, and *Bourne*, to humble them. They came upon the village the 23d August, when there was not a man in arms to oppose them. They had left 40 of their men at Teconet Falls, which is now within the town of Winslow, upon the Kennebeck, and about two miles below Waterville College, upon the opposite side of the river. The English had divided themselves into three squadrons: 80, under *Harman*, proceeded by a circuitous route, thinking to surprise some in their cornfields, while *Moulton*, with 80 more, proceeded directly for the village, which,

sun dreamed beautifully as ever among the fragrant pine-tops and the feathery hemlocks of the river-bank; but his slanting rays smiled upon the ancient hamlet beneath

---

being surrounded by trees, could not be seen until they were close upon it. All were in their wigwams, and the English advanced slowly and in perfect silence. When pretty near, an Indian came out of his wigwam, and, accidentally discovering the English, ran in and seized his gun, and giving the warwhoop, in a few minutes the warriors were all in arms, and advancing to meet them. *Moulton* ordered his men not to fire until the Indians had made the first discharge. This order was obeyed, and, as he expected, they overshot the English, who then fired upon them in their turn, and did great execution. When the Indians had given another volley, they fled with great precipitation to the river, whither the chief of their women and children had also fled during the fight. Some of the English pursued and killed many of them in the river, and others fell to pillaging and burning the village. *Mogg*, their chief, disdained to fly with the rest, but kept possession of a wigwam, from which he fired upon the pillagers. In one of his discharges he killed a Mohawk, whose brother, observing it, rushed upon and killed him; and thus ended the strife. There were about 60 warriors in the place, about one half of whom were killed.

"The famous *Rasle* shut himself up in his house, from which he fired upon the English; and, having wounded one, Lieutenant *Jaques*, of Newbury, burst open the door, and shot him through the head, although *Moulton* had given orders that none should kill him. He had an English boy with him, about 14 years old, who had been taken some time before from the frontiers, and whom the English reported *Rasle* was about to kill. Great brutality and ferocity are chargeable to the English in this affair, according to their own account; such as killing women and children, and scalping and mangling the body of Father *Rasle*.

"There was here a handsome church, with a bell, on which the English committed a double sacrilege, first robbing it, then setting it on fire; herein surpassing the act of the first English circumnavigator in his depredations upon the Spaniards in South America; for he only took away the gold and silver vessels of a church, and its crucifix, because it was of massy gold, set about with diamonds, and that, too, upon the advice of his chaplain. 'This might pass,' says a reverend author, 'for sea divinity, but justice is quite another thing.' Perhaps it will be as well not to inquire here what kind of *divinity* would authorize the acts recorded in these wars, or, indeed, any wars.

"Upon this memorable event in our early annals, Father *Charlevoix* should be heard. There were not, says he, at the time the attack was made, above 50 warriors at Neridgewok; these seized their arms, and run in disorder, not to defend the place against an enemy who was already in it, but to favour the flight of the women, the old men, and the children, and to give them time to gain the side of the river, which was not yet in possession of the English. Father RASLE, warned by the clamours and tumult, and the danger in which he found his proselytes, ran to present himself to the assailants, hoping to draw all their fury upon him, that thereby he might prove the salvation of his flock. His hope was vain; for

[177] whose ashes its exterminated dwellers were slumbering the last sleep!

The grave of Father Rasle, a green mound overlooking the stream, was pointed out to us. A granite obelisk to his memory was erected by Bishop Fenwick, of Boston, a few years since, but was demolished by a party of miscreants soon after its completion. My object in this lengthened episode upon the Norridgewocks, so casually introduced, has been twofold: to illustrate the peaceful policy of the French towards the Indian all over the con-

---

hardly had he discovered himself, when the English raised a great shout, which was followed by a shower of shot, by which he fell dead near to the cross which he had erected in the centre of the village: seven Indians who attended him, and who endeavoured to shield him with their own bodies, fell dead at his side. Thus died this charitable pastor, giving his life for his sheep, after 37 years of painful labours.

"Although the English shot near 2000 muskets, they killed but 30 and wounded 40. They spared not the church, which, after they had indignantly profaned its sacred vases and the adorable body of Jesus Christ, they set on fire. They then retired with precipitation, having been seized with a sudden panic. The Indians returned immediately into the village; and their first care, while the women sought plants and herbs proper to heal the wounded, was to shed tears upon the body of their holy missionary. They found him pierced with a thousand shot, his scalp taken off, his skull fractured with hatchets, his mouth and eyes filled with dirt, the bones of his legs broken, and all his members mutilated in a hundred different ways.

"Such is the account of the fall of *Rasle*, by a brother of the faith; a deplorable picture, by whomsoever related! Of the truth of its main particulars there can be no doubt, as will be seen by a comparison of the above translation with the account preceding it. There were, besides *Mogg*, other chief Indians who fell that day: 'Bomazeen, Mogg, Wissememet, Job, Carabesett, and Bomazeen's son-in-law, all famous warriors.' The inhumanity of the English on this occasion, especially to the women and children, cannot be excused. It greatly eclipses the lustre of the victory." *Drake's Book of the Indians*, b. iii., c. 9.— Flagg.

Comment by Ed. Instead of the French and Indian War (1754-1763), Flagg is doubtless referring to Queen Anne's War (1702-1713).

A large amount of valuable but scattered documentary and secondary information concerning this massacre and the causes leading to it may be found under captions "Norridgewock" and "Rasle" in indexes to Maine Historical Society *Collections*, and *Documents relative to Colonial History of State of New York* (Albany, 1854-61). See also William Allen, *History of Norridgewock* (Norridgewock, 1849).

tinent, and to contrast it with that of other Europeans.

The ride from Kaskaskia to Prairie du Rocher in early autumn is truly delightful. Crossing *Aubuchon*, formerly called St. Philippe — a passage from the Mississippi to the Kaskaskia, about four miles above the town, and through which, in high floods, a rapid current passes from one river to the other — the path lay through a tract of astonishing fertility, where the wild fruit flourishes with a luxuriance known to no other soil. Endless thickets of the wild plum[42] and the blackberry, interlaced and matted together by the young grape-vines streaming with gorgeous clusters, were to be seen stretching for miles along the plain. Such boundless profusion of wild fruit I had never seen before. Vast groves of the ruby crab-apple, the golden persimmon,[43] the black and white mulberry,[44] and the wild cherry,[45] were [178] sprinkled with their rainbow hues in isolated masses over the prairie, or extended themselves in long luxurious streaks glowing in the sun. The pawpaw,[46] too, with its luscious, pulpy fruit; the peach, the pear, and the quince, all thrive in wild luxuriance here; while of the nuts, the pecan or Choctaw nut, the hickory, and the black walnut, are chief. As for grapes, the indigenous vines are prolific; and the fruit is *said* to be so excellent, that wine might be, and even has been, made from them, and has been exported by the early French in such quantities to France, that the trade was prohibited lest the sale of a staple of that kingdom should be injured! But all this is undoubtedly exaggeration, if no more. Although the grape and the wine

[42] *Prunus Americana.*— FLAGG.

[43] Indian Date, by the French called Placminier, *Diosporus Virginiana.*— FLAGG.

[44] *Morus Rubra* and *Alba.*— FLAGG.

[45] *Prunus Cerasus Virginia.*— FLAGG.

[46] Custard apple, *Annona glabra.*— FLAGG.

of southern Illinois have long been the theme of the traveller through that delightful region, from the worthy Father Hennepin, who tells us of the purple clusters lending their rich hues to the gliding wave, to the tourist of the present day, yet from personal observation I am confident they are *now* by no means of much importance, and from good authority am inclined to think they *never* were so. As to the manufacture of wine becoming a matter interesting to commerce, there is no probability of that. A kind of liquor was formerly made in some quantities from what is called the *winter grape*, common to the same latitude in many portions of the United States, but it is said to have been a very indifferent beverage. It was made in the following simple manner: the clusters were heaped in broad, shallow [179] vessels of wood, and, after being crushed, the juice was expressed through perforations for the purpose in the sides and bottom, by the application of heavy weights, into vessels prepared for its reception. Slight fermentation then completed the process.[47]

A ride of some hours through this delightful region brought me to the bluffs, which, at this point extending into the plain, confine the bottom to a narrow strip, bounded on the one side by the Mississippi, and on the other by the battlement of the cliffs, upward of an hundred feet in height. Beneath lies the French village of *Prairie du Rocher*, so called from its situation.[48] It is thirteen miles from Kaskaskia, and its low cottages scattered along, like the tents of a nomadic tribe, for miles, are completely overhung by the huge, beetling crags above. From the deep alluvion along the river's verge rises an enormous

[47] Breckenridge.— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. Henry Marie Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, p. 60.

[48] For a sketch of Prairie du Rocher, see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 70, note 133.— ED.

growth of cottonwood-trees and sycamores, concealing the stream from the view. From the bluffs to this belt of forest stretches away the vast *common field*, rustling with maize. The castor-bean and tobacco-plant are also often seen carpeting the ground with emerald. Around each tenement, as usual, is a plat of cultivated land, and the luxuriance of vegetation is unrivalled. Passing these outskirts, I at length arrived at the body of the village, lying upon a creek or *bayou* of the same name, which winds through its centre, and empties into the Mississippi. This quiet stream was once the scene of a very bloody tragedy. When Illinois first came under territorial government, and courts of civil judicature [180] were established, the functionaries of the law, in passing one day from Cahokia to Kaskaskia, to hold at the latter place a session, stopped a few moments at this creek to water their horses. The animals had scarcely begun to drink, when a shower of balls from an adjoining thicket laid three of the party weltering in their blood.[49] They had neglected the usual precaution to disguise themselves in the garb of the French villagers; and such was the hostility of the Indian tribes, especially that of the Kickapoos, to our countrymen at the time, that to travel in American costume was almost inevitable death. The Indians at that day had the ascendency in point of population, and the Kaskaskia tribe, as well as others, was powerful.

At Prairie du Rocher, as everywhere else where these ancient villages remain as yet undisturbed in their century slumbers, the peculiarities to which I have so frequently alluded stand forth to the traveller's eye. The narrow lanes, the steep-roofed houses, the picketed enclosures, the piazza, the peculiar dress, manners, and amusements

[49] This tradition does not appear to have been noticed in the local histories of the region.— ED.

of the villagers, all point back to a former age. At this place I tarried for dinner, and while my olive-browed hostess, a trim, buxom little matron, was "making ready," I strolled forth to the bluffs, having first received most positive injunctions to make my reappearance when the *horn sounded*; and, scrambling up a ravine, soon stood upon the smooth round summit. The whole tract of country over which my route had led was spread out like a map before me; and the little village lay so directly at my feet [181] I could almost look down its chimneys. Among the crags I obtained some fine petrifactions, which I exhibited to my simple host, much to his astonishment, on my return. Forty years had this man dwelt upon the very spot he then inhabited, the scene of his birth; and almost every day of his life had he ascended the cliffs among which I had been clambering; and yet, though the seashells were standing out in every direction from the surface of the ledge, not the slightest peculiarity of structure had he ever dreamed of. That the great ocean had rolled among these rocks, he could have formed no conception. Experience had told him that when burned they were lime, and he neither knew nor cared to know anything farther of their character or history. This slight incident well exemplifies the simplicity of this singular people. Content to live where his father lived; content to cultivate the spot he tilled; to tread in the steps which he trod; to speak the language he spake, and revere the faith he observed, the French villager is a stranger to the restless cravings of ambition, and acknowledges no inclination to change. At Prairie du Rocher is a little, dark-looking, ancient Catholic church, dedicated to St. Sulpice, formerly "Chapel of Ease" to Fort Chartres, but at present it has no resident priest. The population of the village is about two hundred. Its site is low, and, buried as it is in such enormous

vegetation, the spot must be unhealthy: yet, year after year, and generation after generation, have its present inhabitants continued to dwell where death almost inevitable must have awaited an [182] American. But where will you search for a fleshier, sleeker, swarthier-looking race than these French villagers? Some attribute this phenomenon to diet; some to natural idiosyncrasy; and other some do not attribute at all, but merely stand amazed. The truth of the matter is — and the fact is one well ascertained — that, give a Frenchman a fiddle, a pipe, a glass of claret, and room enough to shake his heels, and, like a mushroom, he'll vegetate on any soil!

La Prairie du Rocher, Ill.

XXXVIII

"I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The thistle shook there its lonely head: the moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out from the windows; the rank grass of the wall waved round his head."— OSSIAN.

"We do love these ancient ruins:
We never tread upon them but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history."

To those of the present day who are in some degree acquainted with the extent of the vast Western Valley, it is not a little surprising to observe how inadequate the conception with which, by its early proprietors, it was regarded, and the singular measures which their mistaken estimates originated. It is but within a very few years that the extent and resources of this country have become sufficiently developed to be at all appreciated. That the French government was wholly unaware of its [183] true character in the cession of old Louisiana to Mr. Jefferson in the early part of the present century, and that our own people were at that time little less ignorant of the same fact, need hardly be suggested to one acquainted

with the diplomatic negotiations of the day, or with the views and the feelings of the respective powers then expressed.

But there are few circumstances which more definitely betray the exceedingly inadequate idea entertained by France respecting her possessions in North America, than that early article of her policy, of uniting her Canadian colonies, by a continuous chain of military posts, with those upon the Gulf of Mexico. That any ministry should seriously have entertained the idea of a line of fortifications *four thousand miles* in extent, through a waste, howling wilderness such as this valley then was, and along the banks of streams such as the Ohio and Mississippi yet continue to be; and that the design should not only have been projected, but that measures should actually have been entered upon for its accomplishment, seems, at the present day, almost incredible. And yet, from the very discovery of the country, was this scheme designed, and ever afterward was steadily pursued by the government of France. La Salle, in his last visit to Paris, suggested the policy of a *cordon* of posts from the St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico, and urged the measure upon Colbert as affording a complete line of defence to the French settlements against those of the English along the Atlantic shore. In furtherance of this design, he sailed to establish a [184] colony at the mouth of the Mississippi, in prosecution of which expedition he lost his life. A line of fortifications was, however, commenced, and gradually extended along the southern shore of Lake Erie: one stood on the present site of the village of that name; another between that point and the Ohio; a third on the present site of Pittsburgh, named Du Quesne; a fourth at the mouth of the Kentucky River; a fifth on the south bank of the Ohio below; a sixth on the northern

bank at the mouth of the Wabash; a seventh at the confluence with the Mississippi; half a dozen others on the latter stream below the junction, and several above upon its banks and along those of the Illinois. Among these last, and the most extensive of the fortifications then erected, was FORT CHARTRES, long the most celebrated military post in North America, now a pile of ruins.[50]

It was a beautiful afternoon, when, leaving the little French hamlet *La Prairie du Rocher*, after a delightful ride of three or four miles through rich groves of the persimmon, the wild apple, and the Chickasaw plum,[51] I began to believe myself not far from the ruins of this famous old fort. Accosting a French villager whom I chanced to meet, I inquired the site of the ruins. He turned on me his glittering dark eye for a moment, and, pointing away to the dense belt of forest upon the left in a direct line with an enormous black-locust on the right of the pathway, passed on. Not the slightest indication of the object of my inquiry was to be [185] seen; but deeming it fruitless to attempt gathering farther information from the dark-browed villager, who was now some distance on his way, I turned my horse's head from the path, and, after labouring several rods through the deep, heavy grass of the prairie, entered the wood. The dense undergrowth

---

[50] For sketches of Forts Presqu' Isle (present site of Erie), Machault (on Allegheny River), Duquesne (present site of Pittsburg), Le Bœuf (near the present town of Waterford, Pennsylvania), St. Joseph (Michigan), and Ouiatonon (on the Wabash), Detroit, and the fort on the Maumee River, see Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, p. 101, note 62; p. 102, note 64; p. 85, note 45; p. 102, note 65; p. 117, note 85; p. 55, note 18; and p. 122, note 87, respectively. On Forts Chartres (on the Mississippi) and Massac (on the Ohio), see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 71, note 136, and p. 73, note 139, respectively. Fort Massac was the only one upon the Ohio. Juchereau's post was erected (1702) at the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi, but was soon abandoned.— ED.

[51] *Prunus Angustifolia.*— FLAGG.

of bushes and matted vines was undisturbed, and there was not an indication of visiters at the spot for months. All seemed deserted, and silent, and drear. The ruins were completely shrouded in foliage, and gigantic trees were rearing their huge shafts from amid the crumbling heaps of rubbish. Wild grape-vines and other parasites were creeping in all directions over the trembling structures; or, drooping forth in pensile gracefulness from the disjointed walls, seemed striving to bind up the shattered fragments, and to conceal the pitiless ravage of time. The effect of this noble old pile of architecture, reposing thus in ruins, and shrouded in the cathedral duskiness of the forest, was singularly solemn.

> "The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean,
> O'ercome with moss and baleful mistletoe.
> Here never shines the sun; here nothing breeds
> Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven."

Securing my horse to the trunk of a young sapling rearing up itself beneath the walls, I at length succeeded, by dint of struggling through the rough thickets and the enormous vegetation, in placing myself at a point from which most of the ruins could be taken at a *coup d'œil.* Some portions of the exterior wall are yet in good preservation, and [186] the whole line of fortification may be easily traced out; but all the structures within the quadrangle are quite dilapidated, and trees of a large size are springing from the ruins: an extensive powder-magazine, however, in a gorge of one of the bastions, yet retains its original form and solidity. The western angle of the fort and an entire bastion was, about fifty years since, undermined and thrown down by a slough from the Mississippi; but the channel is now changed, and is yearly receding, while a young belt of trees has sprung up between the ruins and the water's edge. The prairie in

front of the fort was in cultivation not many years since, and was celebrated for its blue grass.

Fort Chartres was erected by the French in 1720, as a link in the chain of posts which I have mentioned, uniting New-Orleans with Quebec; and as a defence for the neighbouring villages against the Spaniards, who were then taking possession of the country on the opposite side of the Mississippi, as well as against the incursion of hostile Indian tribes. The expense of its erection is said to have been enormous, and it was considered the strongest fortification in North America. The material was brought from the bluffs, some four or five miles distant over the bottom by boats across a considerable intervening sheet of water, and from the opposite side of the Mississippi. In 1756 it was rebuilt; and in 1763, when France ceded her possessions east of the Mississippi to England, the adjoining village embraced about forty families, and a church dedicated to St. Anne.[52] [187] When the English troops took possession of the country, the villagers all removed to the hamlets across the river, then under the French government, having been previously ceded, in the treaty of St. Ildefonso, by Spain to France. The fort was not evacuated, however, until July, 1765, when its commandant, *M. de St. Ange de belle rive*, proceeded to St. Louis with his forces.[53]

[52] Immediately after the erection of Fort Chartres (1720), a village sprang up and the Jesuits established there the parish of Ste. Anne de Fort Chartres. The earliest records of this parish now extant, bear the date 1721.— Ed.

[53] Philip Pittman, who visited Fort Chartres in 1766, says in his *Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi* (London, 1770), p. 46, concerning Fort Chartres: "In the year 1764 there were about forty families in the village near the fort, and a parish church, served by a Franciscan friar, dedicated to St. Anne. In the following year, when the English took possession of the country, they abandoned their houses, except three or four poor families, and settled at the villages on the west side of the Missisippi, chusing to continue under the French government."

In a personal letter dated November 3, 1762, Louis XV deeded to Charles III

While Fort Chartres belonged to France, it was the seat of government for all the neighbouring region; and in 1765, when taken possession of by Captain Sterling, of the Royal Highlanders, it continued to retain its arbitrary character. It was here that the first court of justice, established by Lieutenant-colonel Wilkins, held its sessions.[54] Seven judges were appointed, who came together

---

of Spain all of the French territory in North America lying to the west of Mississippi River; see Shepherd, "Cession of Louisiana to Spain," in *Political Science Quarterly*, xix, pp. 439-458; also Thwaites, *France in America* (New York, 1905), pp. 272-275. Napoleon coerced Charles IV to retrocede Louisiana to France, by the secret treaty of St. Ildefonso, signed October 1, 1800. Three years later (April 30, 1803), Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States for $15,000,000.

Captain Louis St. Ange de Bellerive formally surrendered Fort Chartres to Captain Sir Thomas Sterling on October 10 (not July), 1765, went to St. Louis, and entering the Spanish service was placed in command of the little garrison there, composed almost wholly of his French compatriots who had removed thither from the Illinois. For a sketch of St. Ange, see Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, p. 138, note 109.— Ed.

[54] Sir Thomas Sterling (1733-1808), commissioned captain of the 42nd Highlanders (1757), served with his men in the conquest of Canada, and the capture of Martinique (1759) and Havanna (1762). Having taken command of Fort Chartres in October, 1765, he was relieved of this unpleasant duty, December 4 of the same year, by Major Robert Farmer, heading a detachment of British foot from Mobile. Sterling and his regiment set sail from America (1767), but returned (1776) and served with distinction at the storming of Fort Washington (1776) and of Elizabethtown (1779). He was wounded at Springfield (Massachusetts) in June, 1780. Promoted through the various ranks, he was made a royal aide-de-camp of the king and in turn a colonel (February 19, 1779), major-general (November 20, 1782), and general (January 1, 1801). He became baronet of Andoch on his brother's death, July 26, 1799. Several Illinois historians strangely persist in killing Sterling in 1765, shortly after he took command at Fort Chartres. See *Dictionary of National Biography*; and *Documents relative to Colonial History of New York*, vii, p. 786.

Lieutenant-Colonel John Wilkins, appointed captain of the 55th foot (1755) and then major (1762), commanded at Niagara. In 1763, while marching to relieve Detroit, he was attacked by Indians and forced after heavy losses to retreat to Fort Schlosser. Later, he made an unsuccessful attempt by water, but was caught in a disastrous storm. In August, 1764, Wilkins was promoted to the majorship of the 60th, and in the following January was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the 18th Royal Irish with seven companies. In May, 1768, he was ordered from Philadelphia to Fort Pitt, and thence to Fort Chartres. His administration was unpopular, and grave charges — notably misappropriation of land

monthly at the fortress; but their decisions were very ill received by a people who, until then, had been released from all but *arbitrary* restriction.[55]

The original form of Fort Chartres was an irregular quadrangle, with four bastions; the sides of the exterior

---

and funds — were brought against him. He was suspended in 1771, set sail for Europe the following year, and either died or left the army (1775). See *Historical Magazine*, viii, p. 260; and *Documents relative to Colonial History of New York*, viii, p. 185.— Ed.

[55] Subjoined is a copy of the preliminary proceedings of the first regular court of justice held in Illinois while under the British government. It purports to be transcribed from the state records, and first appeared in a Western newspaper. It lays before the reader a view of the subject, which the most graphic description would fail to present.

"At a Court held at Chartres Village, in the Illinois, this sixth day of November, in the eighth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord, George the Third, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c., &c., &c., in the year of our Lord Christ one thousand seven hundred and sixty-eight, 1768.

"Present, George Morgan, James Remsey, James Campbell, James M'Millar, Jean Baptist Barbeau, and Peter Girardot, Esqrs., Justices. Commissions of the peace granted by John Wilkins, Esqr., Governor and Commandant of the said country, and directed to the gentlemen named, were produced and read.

"Whereupon the said Justices took the several *oaths* of allegiance to his Majesty's person and government, and also the oaths of Justices of the peace; which oaths were administered to them by the Governor and Commandant aforesaid.

"A commission from the said Governor to Dennis M'Croghan, Esq., to be Sheriff of the country aforesaid, was produced by the said Dennis M'Croghan, Esq., and read, who took and subscribed the usual oaths of allegiance to his Majesty's person and government, and also the oath of sheriff for said country.

"The Governor and Commandant aforesaid entered into a recognizance in the sum of five hundred pounds lawful money of Great Britain for the said Sheriff's due performance of his office."

It would appear from the following deed, made by a *military sergeant*, executing the office of sheriff under the style of Provost under Commandant Hugh Lord, in 1772, that the government in Illinois was then purely *military*.

"Be it remembered that on this nineteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-two, by virtue of a writ unto me directed, I, Andrew Hoy, Provost, did seize, levy, and distrain upon the dwelling-house and lot of John Baptist Hubardeau, situated in the village of Kaskaskia, for a debt due as *per* note of hand, of the signature of the aforesaid Hubardeau, for the sum of two thousand and forty *livres*, with interest and *damages*. Now, know ye, that the aforesaid writ of *Fieri Facias* was issued by

polygon being about five hundred feet in extent. The ditch and scarp were commenced, but left uncompleted. The walls, massively constructed of stone, and stuccoed with lime, were upward of two feet in thickness and fifteen feet in height. They still retain this altitude in some portions which are uninjured; and many of the loopholes and the ports for cannon, in the face of the wall and in the

---

Hugh Lord, Esq., Captain in his Majesty's 18th or Royal Regiment of Ireland, in manner and form following:

"George the Third, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c.

"To Sergeant Hoy, Provost.

"We command you that you cause to be made of the (goods) and chattels of John Baptist Hubardeau, in your bailiwick, two thousand and forty *livres*, which Franks & Company, lately, in our court, before us, at Kaskaskia, recovered against him by virtue of a power of attorney, for a debt, with lawful interest, and damages which they have sustained, occasioned as well by the detaining of the said debt, as for their expenses and costs by them laid out in and about their suit in that behalf, whereof the said Hubardeau is convicted, and have you the money before us at Kaskaskia as soon as the sale of said effects shall admit, to render to the said Franks & Company their debt and damages aforesaid, and have then there this writ.

"Given at Fort Gage, this 19th day of December, 1772.

"HUGH LORD, Commandant of Illinois.

"ANDREW HOY, Provost.

"Moreover, that in consequence of further orders from the commandant aforesaid, I did give general notice of the sale thereof by the following advertisement, which was publicly placed for perusal and knowledge of the inhabitants in general, both here and at the village of CAHO.[1]

"PAR AUTORITE.

"Vendredi, à onse heur du Matin le 29th du mois prochain, sera vendu au porte de L'Eglise, la Maison et Terrain du Sieur Jean Baptist Hubardeau, qui est puis en exêcution, payable en Pèlletrie, Bon Argent, lettres de change, ou la bon esclaves, dans le moi de Mai qui vient.

"Au Kas,[2] Decembre 29 [19] th, 1772.

"ANDREW HOY, Provost."

Making allowances for bad French, the following is a translation of this notice:

"BY AUTHORITY.

"Wednesday, at eleven o'clock in the morning of the 29th of next month, I shall sell at the gate of the church, the House and lot of Mr. Jean Baptist Hubar-

[1] Cahokia.

[2] Kaskaskia

flanks of the bastions, are yet to be seen entire. The elegantly dressed freestone, however, which [188] was employed about them, as well as for the cornices and casements of the gate and buildings, has long since been removed. Specimens are to be seen incorporated in some

deau, which is taken in execution, payable in peltry, good silver, bills of exchange, or in good slaves, in the month of May coming.

"Kaskaskia, Dec. 19th, 1772."

"At the expiration of which time, the aforesaid house was, agreeable to law, justice, and equity, exposed to sale, first at the church gate, and afterwards at different parts of the village, to prevent as much as possible, any persons pleading ignorance of the sale thereof. Now, know ye, in discharge of the duty of my office and the trust reposed, after having kept up the said house and lot from the hours of ten to two at the sum of 3200 *livres*, and no person bidding higher, or likely so to do, that the same was struck off to James Remsey, inhabitant of Kaskaskia, who, by these presents, is invested with full right and title thereto, to have and to hold the said messuage and tenements, and all and singular of the premises above mentioned and every part and parcel thereof, with the appurtenances unto the said James Remsey, his heirs and assigns forever: and I, the said Andrew Hoy, Provost, from myself my heirs, the said messuage and tenement and premises and every part thereof against him and his heirs, and against all and every other person and persons whatever, to the said James Remsey, his heirs and assigns shall and will warrant and forever defend by these presents. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal.

"ANDREW HOY, Provost. (L.S.)

"Fort Gage, 29th Dec., 1772.

"Signed, sealed, and delivered in presence of

"WILLIAM DUNBAR,
"ISAAC JOHNSON."

"By virtue of the power and authority in me invested, I do hereby grant unto Mr. James Remsey, late Lieut. of his Majesty's 34th Regiment, a certain tract of land containing — acres in part from the river Kaskaskia to the Mississippi, once the property of one La Bacchou, whereon formerly did stand a water mill, the remains of which are now to be seen. The whole being agreeable to his Majesty's proclamation, confiscated to the King, and is hereby given to said James Remsey, in consideration of His Excellency Gen. Gage's recommendation and for the speedy settlement of his majesty's colony, as likewise the frame of a house with a lot of land thereunto appertaining, opposite the Jesuit's College in the village of Kaskaskia.

"Given under my hand, at Fort Chartres, Nov. 12th, 1767.

"GORDON FORBES,
"Capt. 34th regiment."

This grant of land where the *old mill* stood, is now the site of a speculative *city* called "*Decoigne*," and is about five miles from Kaskaskia on the road to St. Louis.— FLAGG.

of the elegant structures which have since gone up in the neighbouring city.[56]

The military engineering of the early French fortifications in North America was of the school of Vauban; and the massive structures then erected are now monuments, not less of the skill of their founders than of departed time. The almost indestructible character of their masonry has long been a subject of surprise. The walls of Fort Chartres, though half a century has seen them abandoned to the ravages of the elements and of time, yet remain so imperishable, that in some instances it is not easy to distinguish the limestone from the cement; and the neighbouring villagers, in removing the materials for the purposes of building, have found it almost impossible to separate them one from the other.

The buildings which occupied the square area of Fort Chartres were of the same massive masonry as the walls. They consisted of a commandant's and commissary's residence, both noble structures of stone, and of equal size: two extensive lines of barracks, the magazine of stores, with vaulted cellars, and the *corps de guarde*. Within the gorges of the eastern bastions were the powder-magazine and a bakehouse; in the western, a prison, with dungeons and some smaller buildings. There were two sally-ports to the fortification in the middle of opposite faces of the wall; and a broad avenue passed from one to the other, directly through the square, [189] along the sides of which were ranged the buildings. A small banquette a few feet in height ran parallel to the loopholes, for the purpose of elevating the troops when discharging musketry at an enemy without.

---

[56] Flagg's description agrees in the main with that given by Philip Pittman (see *ante*, p. 77, note 53), save that the latter is more detailed. Judging from the phraseology, Flagg must have read Pittman's description.— Ed.

Such was Fort Chartres in the pride of its early prime; the seat of power, festivity, and taste; the gathering-spot of all the rank, and beauty, and fashion the province could then boast. Many a time, doubtless, have the walls of this stern old citadel rung to the note of revelry; and the light, twinkling footstep of the dark-eyed creole has beat in unison with a heart throbbing in fuller gush from the presence of the young, martial figure at her side! Fort Chartres, in its early years, was doubtless not more the headquarters of arbitration and rule than of gentility and etiquette. The settlers of the early French villages, though many of them indigent, were not all of them rude and illiterate. Induced by anticipations of untold wealth, such as had crowned the adventurers of Spain in the southern section of the Western Continent, grants and charters of immense tracts of territory in these remote regions had been made by the crown of France to responsible individuals; and thus the leaders in these golden enterprises were generally gentlemen of education and talent, whose manners had been formed within the precincts of St. Cloud, then the most elegant court in Europe. Many of these enthusiastic adventurers, it is true, returned to France in disappointment and disgust; and many of them removed to the more genial latitude of Lower Louisiana: [190] yet a few, astonished at the fertility and extent of a country of which they had never dreamed before; delighted with the variety and delicacy of its fruits, and reminded by the mildness of the climate of the sweetest portions of their own beautiful France, preferred to remain. By the present degenerate race of villagers, those early days are referred to as a "golden age" in their history, and the "old residenters" as *wonderful* beings. Consider the singular situation of these men — a thousand miles from the Atlantic shores, surrounded by savages and by their own

countrymen scarce less ignorant, and separated by pathless mountains from a community of civilized man. The higher stations in the French army were at that era, too, more than at present, occupied by men of genius and information, while the Catholic priesthood was equally distinguished for literary attainment. Under circumstances like these, was it other than natural that reciprocity of feeling and congeniality of taste should have sought their gratification by mutual and frequent intercourse? Fort Chartres must, therefore, have been the seat of hospitality, religious celebration, and kindly feeling. Here the fleshy old *habitans* of the neighbouring villages dozed away many an hour of sober jovialness with their "droughty cronies" over the pipe and the claret of their own vineyards; while their dark-haired daughters tripped away on the green sward before them in the balmy moonlit summer eve with the graceful officers of the fortress.

Here, too, has been witnessed something of "the pride, and pomp, and circumstance of glorious war." [191] The *fleur-de-lis* of the Fifteenth Louis has rolled out its heavy folds above these stern old towers; the crimson Lion of England has succeeded; and the stripes and stars of our own republic have floated over both in triumph. The morning gun of the fortress has boomed across the broad prairie, and been reverberated from yonder cliffs: the merry reveille has rose upon the early breeze, and wakened the slumbering echoes of the forest; and the evening bugle from the walls has wailed its long-drawn, melancholy note along those sunset waters of the *Eternal River*!

Such, I repeat, was Fort Chartres in its better days, but such is Fort Chartres no more. I lingered for hours with saddened interest around the old ruins, until the long misty beams of the setting sun, streaming through the forest, reminded me that I had not yet secured a shel-

ter for the coming night. Remounting my horse, I left the spot at a brisk pace, and a ride of a few miles brought me to a dwelling situated upon a mound somewhat elevated from the low, flat bottom-land around, about one mile from the Mississippi, and commanding a view of the distant lake and bluffs to the north. Here, then, I affix the name by which is known all the surrounding region.

Fort Chartres, Ill.

XXXIX

"I know not how the truth may be,
I tell the tale as told to me."

"Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war."
Othello.

FORT CHARTRES has already detained me longer than was my design. My pen has been unconsciously led on from item to item, and from one topic to another; and now, in leaving this celebrated fortress, I cannot forbear alluding to a few incidents connected with its origin and early history, which have casually presented themselves to my notice. Selection is made from many of a similar character, which at another time and in a different form may employ the writer's pen. The conclusion of my last number attempted a description of the spot from which it was dated; and, reader, a beautiful spot it was, beneath the soft, gentle radiance of a summer evening. Not soon, I ween, shall I forget the wild romance of that moonlit scene as I reclined upon the gray old bench at the door of the farmhouse after the evening meal was over, and listened to the singular events of which that region had been the theatre in other days. More than forty years had seen mine host a resident of the spot, and no one, with diligence more exemplary [193] than his

own, had gathered up the curious legends of the place, many of them from aged men who had themselves been witnesses of the events they chronicled. By these traditions, whatever may be our inclination to yield them credence at this late period, the origin and history of the fortification of Fort Chartres is by no means devoid of interest. In 1720, when it was resolved on by the crown of France to erect a fortress at this point upon the Mississippi, in continuation of her line of posts uniting Quebec with New-Orleans, and for the defence of her colonies, a military engineer of the school of the celebrated Sebastian Vauban was sent over to project and accomplish the design.[57] To his own discretion, within prescribed limits — so goes the story — was confided the whole undertaking. Far and wide throughout the province resounded the note of preparation. The peaceful villager was summoned from his pipe and his plough; the din of steel and stone broke in upon the solitudes; and at length, at the enormous expenditure of nine millions of livres, arose Fort Chartres; and its battlements frowned over the forests and cast their shadows along the waters of the *Eternal River*! The work was completed, and fondly believed its architect that he had reared for his memory a monument for the generations of coming time. A powerful battery of iron ordnance protruded from the ports, and every department of the fortress was supplied with the most extensive munitions of war. A large number of cannon for many years were laying beneath the walls of the fort, in the early part [194] of the present century, buried in matted vines and underbrush. The fortress was completed, and the *silver lilies* floated over the walls; but the engineer had far exceeded the limits prescribed in erecting a work of such massive and needless strength,

[57] Relative to Fort Chartres, see *ante*, p. 75, note 50.— Ed.

and a missive royal summoned him to St. Cloud. The miserable man, aware that little was to be hoped from the clemency of the warlike Louis XV., poisoned himself upon arriving in his native land, to escape the indignation of his sovereign. Previously, however, to his departure for France, immense sums in gold for defraying the expenses of the fortress had been forwarded him to New Orleans and sent up the river, but, owing to his subsequent arrest, were never distributed to the labourers. Tradition averreth these vast treasures to have been buried beneath the foundations of the fort. However the truth may be, the number of those who have believed and searched has not been inconsiderable: but unhappily, as is ever the case with these "hidden treasures," the light has gone out just at the critical moment, or some luckless wight, in his zeal, has thought proper to *speak* just as the barrel of money has been struck by the mattock, or some other untoward event has occurred to dissolve the charm of the witch-hazel, and to stir up the wrath of those notable spirits which are always known to stand guard over buried gold! And thus has it happened that the treasure yet reposes in primeval peace; and the big family Bible, always conveyed to the spot on such inquisitorial occasions, has alone prevented consequences most [195] fatal! Whether the good people of the vicinity in the present unbelieving generation have faith to dig, I know not; but, when I visited the spot, the earth of the powder-magazine to which I have alluded exhibited marvellous indication of having been disturbed at no distant period previous. So much for the origin of Fort Chartres. The story *may* be true, it may *not*. At all events, it will be remembered I do not endorse it.

There is also a tradition yet extant of a stratagem of war by which Fort Chartres was once captured, worthy

the genius of Fabius Maximus, and partaking, moreover, somewhat of history in character. The name of George Rogers Clarke is familiar to every one who can claim even indifferent acquaintance with the early border warfare of the West. This extraordinary man, having satisfied himself, like Hannibal of Carthage, that the only way decisively to conquer a crafty and powerful foe was by carrying the war to his own altars and hearths, placed himself at the head of a few hundred of the Virginia militia in 1778, and set forth upon one of the most daring enterprises ever chronicled on the page of military history — the celebrated expedition against the distant post of Fort Vincent, now Vincennes. Our country was then at war with Great Britain, and this fort, together with those upon the lakes and the Mississippi, were in possession of the enemy and their savage allies. Colonel Clarke crossed the mountains with his little band; descended the Monongahela and the Ohio to within sixty miles of the mouth of [196] the latter, and there concealing his boats, he plunged with his followers through swamps, and creeks, and marshes almost impassable, a distance of one hundred and thirty miles, and in a space of time incredibly short, arrived at night opposite the village of Kaskaskia. So overwhelming was the surprise, that the town, though fortified, was taken without a blow. History goes on to tell us that a detachment of troops, mounted on the horses of the country, was immediately pushed forward to surprise the villages of Fort Chartres and Cahokia, higher up the Mississippi; and that they were all taken without resistance, and the British power in that quarter completely destroyed.[58] So much for History, now for Tradition.

[58] Hall.— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. Flagg's authority is James Hall, *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners in the West* (Philadelphia, 1835).

Owing to the encroachments by the Mississippi, Fort Chartres was abandoned

When the little band arrived beneath the walls of Fort Chartres, the numbers of the garrison far exceeding those of the besiegers, the latter, as if in despair of success, shortly took up the line of march and disappeared behind the distant bluffs. Days passed on; diligent examination of the heights was kept up with glasses from the walls, but no enemy returned. At length, when apprehension had begun to die away, early one morning a troop of cavalry appeared winding over the bluffs, their arms glittering in the sunlight, and descended from view apparently into the plain beneath. Hour after hour the march continued; troop after troop, battalion upon battalion, regiment after regiment, with their various ensigns and habiliments of warfare, appeared in lengthened files, wound over the bluffs, and disappeared. Alarmed [197] and astonished at the countless swarms of the invaders, the garrison hastily evacuated the fortress, and for dear life and liberty, soon placed the broad Mississippi between themselves and the cloud of locusts! Hardly was this precipitate manœuvre well accomplished, when the alarum of drum and fife was heard, and the identical force which but a few days before had raised the siege, and in despair had retreated from beneath the walls, now paraded through the open sally-ports, their rags and tatters fluttering by way of "pomp and circumstance" in the evening breeze. This fortunate *ruse du guerre* had been accomplished through the favourable nature of the ground, a few extra stand of colours manufactured for the occasion, and a variety of uniforms and arms of like character. After winding over the bluffs into the plain beneath, they again

---

in 1772, and was never again used as a garrison. The legend given by Flagg is somewhat exaggerated. The French settlements adjacent to Kaskaskia readily accepted the situation on being invited by Clark's representatives, who were accompanied by Kaskaskians as friendly interpreters.

ascended through a defile unobserved by the garrison, and once more appeared in different guise and order in rear of their comrades. "Distance," too, cast doubtless not a little "enchantment" over "the view;" and then the fear and trepidation of the worthy garrison probably sharpened their optics to detect all the peril in store for them, and, perchance, somewhat more. Now, reader, you can do as you choose touching belief of all this. And while you are making up a decision on the point, permit me to furnish yet another scrap of *History*, which may, peradventure, assist.

For sixteen days was Col. Clarke employed in his march from Kaskaskia to Vincennes, after the [198] capture of the military posts upon the Mississippi. At length, after toils incredible, he reached the Wabash. High upon the eastern bank, its base swept by the rolling flood, stood Fort Vincent, the British fortress, at that period garrisoned by a superior corps of soldiery, with an auxiliary force of six hundred Indian warriors, and under the command of a skilful officer, Gov. Hamilton. On the western bank was spread out a broad sheet of alluvion five miles in breadth, completely inundated by the swollen stream. After five days of toil this wilderness of waters was passed; the rolling current of the Wabash was crossed in the night, and the morning sun beheld these daring men before Vincennes. As they approached the town — history goes on to relate — over the broad and beautiful prairie upon which it stands, at the moment his troops were discovered by the enemy, Clarke found himself near a small ancient mound, which concealed part of his force from the foe. Under this covert he countermarched his men in so skilful a manner, that the leading files, which had been seen from the town, were transferred undiscovered to the rear, and made to pass again and again in

sight of the enemy, until his whole force had several times been displayed, and his little detachment of jaded troops assumed the appearance of an extended column greatly superior to its actual strength. The garrison was promptly summoned to surrender, and, after a brief defence, Gov. Hamilton struck his flag to a body of men not half as powerful as his own.[59]

[199] Next in importance to Fort Chartres, of that chain of military posts commenced by the French in the Valley of the Mississippi, was FORT DU QUESNE;[60] and of this celebrated fortress, so notorious in the bloody annals of border warfare, it may not be irrelevant, in concluding the present subject, to add a few sentences. This post was erected on that low tongue of land, at the head of the Ohio and confluence of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers, where Pittsburgh now stands, commanded on all sides by lofty bluffs. It was built by M. de la Jonquier, at command of the Marquis du Quesne, governor of Canada. In 1754 the bold Contrecœur came down the Alleghany, with a thousand Frenchmen in canoes, and eighteen pieces of artillery; and, dispersing the small colonial force, intrenched himself upon the spot. This was the prologue to that bloody drama, the catastrophe of which deprived France of all her possessions east of the Mississippi. In 1758 Fort du Quesne was taken by Gen. Forbes; a more scientific and extensive fortress was erected on the spot, at an expense of sixty thousand pounds sterling,

---

[59] Hall.— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. Compare with R. G. Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark won the Northwest*, pp. 52-62.

[60] A fort was begun by Charles Trent, with a few Virginia troops, in February, 1754. On April 17, Contrecœur took the place, completed the fort, and named it Duquesne in honor of the then governor of New France. See Croghan's *Journals*, in our volume i, p. 85, note 45; also F. A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 156, note 20.— ED.

and, in honour of William Pitt, then Premier of England, named Fort Pitt. It is difficult to conceive what could have been the design of these commanders in erecting such a massive fortress on such a spot, unless to impress the minds of their savage but simple neighbours; for resistance to artillery planted upon the neighbouring heights would have been quite as vain as any attack of the Indians upon its walls with their primitive weapons. The same may be said of [200] nearly all the early fortifications in the West, and of some of more modern date upon our frontier. Subsequently Fort Pitt came into the possession of our government as part of the estate of the Penn family, and is now only a heap of rubbish. Thus much for early military posts in the Valley of the Mississippi.

So deeply interested was I in listening to the " legendary lore" associated with the spot upon which I was sitting, that hours glided unobserved away, and the full moon was culminating in cloudless splendour from the zenith when we retired.

Early the following morning I was in the saddle. The heavy night-mists lay wavering, like a silvery mantle, all over the surface of that broad plain; and the crimson clouds, rolling up the eastern sky, proclaimed the rising sun. After a short ride I reached the former site of St. Philippe, a settlement of the French, since called *Little Village*. Its "common field" is now comprised in the single plantation of Mr. M'David. It was at this point that Philippe Francis Renault — from whom the village received its name, as well as a large section of the neighbouring region, known to this day as "Renault's Tract" — established himself in 1719, with two hundred miners from France, in anticipation of discovering gold and silver.[61]

[61] Renault sailed from France in 1719, but did not reach Illinois until 1721. For a short sketch of Renault, see *ante*, p. 42, note 18.

St. Philippe, five miles from Fort Chartres on the road to Cahokia, was founded

He was disappointed; but is said to have obtained large quantities of lead from the region along the opposite bank of the Mississippi, in the vicinity of Ste. Genevieve; and to have discovered, moreover, a copper mine near Peoria. St. Philippe was once a considerable village. Previous to 1765 — when possession of the country was claimed [201] by the English government, and, like the other French settlements, it was abandoned by the villagers — it is said to have comprised twenty or thirty families, a Catholic church, and a water-mill; while the surrounding meadow afforded pasturage for extensive herds of cattle.

Leaving St. Philippe, the winding pathway in a few miles had conducted me into the depths of a forest of gigantic cotton-trees upon the left, encircled by enormous grape-vines, and the ground beneath entangled by a wilderness of underbrush and thickets of wild fruit. In a few moments the forest opened unexpectedly before me, and at my feet rolled on the turbid floods of the Mississippi, beyond which went up the towering cliffs of limestone, hoar and ragged, to the sheer height of some hundred feet from the water's edge. They were the cliffs of Herculaneum, with their shot-towers.[62] For the first time I discovered that I had mistaken my way. Perceiving the low log-cabin of a woodcutter among the trees, I had soon obtained the requisite information, and was retracing my steps; but a weary plod through the deep black

about 1725 by Renault, on a tract granted to him in 1723. Philip Pittman, who visited the place in 1766, wrote that there were about sixteen houses and a small church left standing, although all the inhabitants save the captain of the militia had crossed the Mississippi the preceding year. In 1803, John Everett was the sole inhabitant.— Ed.

[62] For location and settlement of Herculaneum, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 212, note 122; for the shot-towers there, see our volume xxvi, p. 103, note 66.— Ed.

loam, and the tall grass weltering in the night-dews, and the thickets of the dripping meadows, was anything but agreeable. There were but few farms along my route, and the tenants of those with whom I chanced to meet betrayed too plainly, by their ghastly visages, and their withered, ague-racked limbs, the deadly influences of the atmosphere they inhaled. As I wandered through this region, where vegetation, towering in all its rank [202] and monstrous forms, gave evidence of a soil too unnaturally fertile for culture by man, whose bread must be bought by "the sweat of his brow," I thought I could perceive a deadly nausea stealing over my frame, and that every respiration was a draught of the floating pestilence. I urged onward my horse, as if by flight to leave behind me the fatal contagion which seemed hovering on every side; as if to burst through the poisonous vapours which seemed distilling from every giant upas along my path. That this region should be subject to disease and death is a circumstance by no means singular. Indeed, it seems only unaccountable to the traveller that it may be inhabited at all. A soil of such astonishing depth and fertility, veiled from the purifying influences of the sun by the rank luxuriance of its vegetation, in the stifling sultriness of midsummer sends forth vast quantities of mephitic vapour fatal to life; while the decay of the enormous vegetables poisons the atmosphere with putrid exhalations. Cultivation and settlement will, of course, as in the older states, remedy this evil to some extent in time. It is said that the southern border of a lake in this region is less unhealthy than the northern, on account of the prevalence of winds from the former quarter during the summer months; and that the immediate margin of a river, though buried in vegetation, is less liable to disease than the neighbouring bluffs, upon which hang the night and morning

vapours. A dry and somewhat elevated spot is preferable to either for a cabin; and it should be well ventilated, and never closely surrounded by [203] cornfields. The rank and massive foliage shields the earth from the sunbeams, which exhale its poisonous damps; and in its rapid growth, the plant abstracts from the surrounding atmosphere one of its vital ingredients. Indeed, most of the diseases peculiar to the West are superinduced by imprudence, ignorance, or negligence in nursing. Let the recent emigrant avoid the chill, heavy night-dews and the sickening sultriness of the noontide sun; provide a close dwelling, well situated and ventilated, and invariably wear thicker clothing at night than in the day, and he may live on as long and as healthily in the West as in his native village. Bilious intermittents are the most prevalent and fatal diseases in the sickly months of August, September, and October; and in the winter and spring pleurisies are frequent. The genuine phthisic, or pulmonary consumption of New-England, is rarely met. A mysterious disease, called the "*milk* sickness"— because it was supposed to be communicated by that liquid — was once alarmingly prevalent in certain isolated districts of Illinois.[63] Whole villages were depopulated; and though the mystery was often and thoroughly investigated, the cause of the disease was never discovered. By some it was ascribed to the milk or to the flesh of cows feeding upon a certain unknown poisonous plant, found only in certain districts; by others, to certain springs of water, or to the exhalations of certain

[63] Milk-sickness, no longer so diagnosed by medical authorities, is described by early writers in the Middle West as a malignant disease attacking both men and stock. It was supposed that the disease was contracted by eating the flesh or dairy products of animals that had grazed on a certain weed. In the case of the human being the symptoms were intolerable thirst, absolute constipation, low temperature, an extreme nervous agitation, but with an absence of chills and headaches. Recovery seemed to be the exception. Although no spe-

marshes. The mystery attending its operations and its terrible fatality at one period created a perfect panic in the settlers; nor was this at all wonderful. The disease appears [204] now to be vanishing. But, of all other epidemics, the "fever and ague" is the scourge of the West. Not that it often terminates fatally, except by superinducing a species of consumption; but, when severe and protracted, it completely shatters the constitution; and, like Mezentius, the victim ever after bears about him a living death. In its lighter form, most of the settlers at some time or other experience it, as it is brought on by exposure: and when I consider that, during my ramble in the West, I have subjected myself to every variety of climate and circumstance; have been drenched by night-dews and morning-dews; by the vapours of marshes and forests, and by the torrents of summer showers; have wandered day after day over the endless prairies beneath a scorching sun, and at its close have laid myself anywhere or nowhere to rest; when I consider this, I cannot but wonder at the escape of a constitution naturally feeble from complete prostration. Yet never was it more vigorous than during this tour on the prairies.

At length, after a ride which seemed interminable, I found myself at the foot of the bluffs; and, drawing up my horse, applied at a cabin attached to an extensive farm for

---

cific remedy was used, the best results were thought to be obtained by judicious stimulation and careful nursing. The same disease among stock was usually known as "trembles." The symptoms were the same as with men, and death followed, generally within eight or ten days. A farm where this dreaded disease had come was called a "milk-sick farm," and was rendered almost unsalable. For a later and more detailed account, see Thomas L. M'Kenney, *Memoirs, official and personal, with Sketches of Travels among the Northern and Southern Indians*, etc. (New York, 1846), p. 141. Dr. William M. Beach, a pioneer physician in Ohio, who had had much experience with milk sickness, wrote an article for Albert H. Buck, *Reference Handbook of Medical Science* (New York, 1884-87), volume v. An abstract of the above article by Beach is given in the edition for 1902.— Ed.

refreshment. A farmer of respectable garb and mien came tottering towards the gateway; and, to my request, informed me that every individual of his family was ill of the "fever and ague." I inquired for the state of his own health, remarking his *shattered* appearance. "Yes, I am shattered," he replied, leaning heavily against the rails for support; "the agues and fevers have terribly [205] racked me; but I am better, I am *better* now." Ah, thought I, as, returning his kind good-morning, I resumed my route, you think, poor man, that health will revisit your shattered frame; but that pallidness of brow, and those sunken temples, tell me that you must die. Consumption's funeral fires were already kindling up in the depths of his piercing eye. At the next cabin, where I was so fortunate as to succeed in obtaining refreshment, I was informed that the poor fellow was in the last stages of a decline brought on by undue exposure to the chill, poisonous night-dews of the bottom. The individual from whom this information was received was himself far from enjoying uninterrupted health, though thirty-five years had seen him a tenant of the spot upon which I met him.

Monroe County, Ill.

XL

"'Tis many moons ago — a long — long time."

R. H. Wilde.

"Rich, silent, deep, they stand; for not a gale
Rolls its light billows o'er the bending plain:
A calm of plenty! till the ruffled air
Falls from its poise, and gives the breeze to blow."

The Seasons.

In the course of my journeying in the regions of the "Far West," it has more than once chanced to me to encounter individuals of that singular class commonly

termed " Squatters ; " those sturdy pioneers who formed the earliest American settlements along our western frontier. And, in my casual intercourse with them, I have remarked, with not a little surprise, a decision of character, an acuteness of penetration, and a depth and originality of thought betrayed in their observations, strangely enough contrasting with the rude solitude of their life. For more than half a century, mayhap, Nature

> " Had been to them a more familiar face
> Than that of man; "

and whether, in the present exhibition of intellectual energy, we are to claim an argument for the influence of natural scenery upon character, or may find a corroboration of the theory of diversity of mental ability; or to whatever circumstance it may be attributed, [207] very assuredly it owes not its origin to the improvements of education or the advantages of society. There is also remarked in these rude men a susceptibility and refinement of feeling, and a delicacy of sentiment, which one would suppose hardly compatible with a protracted continuance of their semi-savage life.

It was at the frugal, though well-spread board of an individual of this class that I was pleased to find myself seated, after my tedious morning ramble of several hours through the weltering vegetation of the prairie. Mine host was a man of apparently forty, though in reality some eight or ten years in advance of that age: his form, of medium stature, was symmetrical, erect, and closely knit, betraying considerable capability of endurance, though but little of muscular strength: his countenance, at first sight, was by no means prepossessing; indeed, the features, while in repose, presented an aspect harsh — almost forbidding; but, when lighted up by animation, there was discoverable in their rapid play a mildness which well

compared with the benevolent expression of a soft blue eye. Such was the *physique* of my backwoods pioneer, who for forty years had been a wanderer on the outskirts of civilization, and had at length been overtaken by its rapid march.

As I had before me but an easy ride for the day, I proposed to mine host, when our repast was over, that he should accompany me to the summit of the range of bluffs which rose behind his cabin, towering to the height of several hundred feet above the roof. To this he readily assented, and well did [208] the magnificent view commanded from the top compensate for the toil of the ascent. The scene was grand. "Yonder," said my companion, seating himself on the earth at my side, and stretching out his arm to the southeast, " yonder lies the village of old Kaskaskia, with the bluffs of the river beyond, rising against the sky; while a little to the left you catch the white cliffs of Prairie du Rocher. In that heavy timber to the south are the ruins of Fort Chartres, and to the right, across the lake, fifty years ago stood St. Philippe. The Mississippi is concealed from us, but its windings can be traced by the irregular strip of forest which skirts its margin. Beyond the stream, stretching away to the northwest, the range of heights you view are the celebrated *cornice-cliffs* [64] above Herculaneum; and at intervals you catch a glimpse of a shot-tower, resting like a cloud against the sky, upon the tallest pinnacles. The plain at our feet, which is now sprinkled with cornfields, was once the site of an Indian village. Forty years ago, the ruins of the wigwams and the dancing circle surrounding the war-post could be distinctly traced out: and even now my ploughshare every spring turns up articles of pottery

[64] Two ranges of cliffs are known by this name. One is below Ste. Genevieve.— FLAGG.

which constituted their domestic utensils, together with axes and mallets of stone, spear and arrow heads and knives of flint, and all their rude instruments of war. Often of a fine evening," continued my companion, after a pause, "when my work for the day is over, and the sun is going down [209] in the west, I climb up to this spot and look out over this grand prospect; and it almost makes me sad to think how the tribes that once possessed this beautiful region have faded away. Nearly forty years ago, when I came with my father from old Virginia, this whole state, with its prairies, and forests, and rich bottoms, was the hunting-ground of the Indians. On this spot we built our cabin; and though I have since lived far off on the outskirts of the Missouri frontier, I always had an affection for this old bottom and these bluffs, and have come back to spend here the rest of my days. But the Indians are gone. The round top of every bluff in yonder range is the grave of an Indian chief."

While my singular companion was making these observations, somewhat in the language I have attempted to give, interrupted from time to time by my inquiries, I had myself been abstractedly employed in thrusting a knife which was in my hand into the yielding mould of the mound upon which we sat, when, suddenly, the blade, striking upon a substance somewhat harder than the soil, snapped into fragments. Hastily scraping away the loose mould to the depth of some inches, the *femur* of a human skeleton protruding from the soil was disinterred, and, in a few minutes, with the aid of my companion, the remnants of an entire skeleton were laid bare. Compared with our own limbs, the bones seemed of a size almost gigantic; and from this circumstance, if from no other, it was evident that our melancholy moralizing upon the destinies of the Indians had been indulged upon a very

fitting spot — [210] the grave of one of its chieftains. Originally, the body had no doubt been covered to the depth of many feet, and the shallowness of soil at the present time indicates a lapse of centuries. Still these graves of the bluffs, which doubtless belonged to the ancestors of the present aborigines, will neither be confounded nor compared with the gigantic earth-heaps of the prairies. Strangely enough, this *has* been the case, though a moment's reflection must convince one that they are the monuments of a far later race.

Descending the bluffs by an ancient path in a ravine, *said* to have been made in conveying oak timber to Fort Chartres at the period of its erection, my host conducted me into one of the enclosures of his farm, a spot which had evidently once been the ordinary burial-place of the ancient Indian village. Graves, sufficient, apparently, for hundreds of individuals, were yet to be seen upon every side. They were arranged parallel to each other in uniform ranges, and were each formed by a rough slab of limestone upon either side, and two at the extremities, terminating in an obtuse angle. From several of these old sepulchres we threw out the sand, and, at the depth of about four feet, exhumed fragments of human remains in various stages of preservation, deposited upon a broad slab of limestone at the bottom. When taken together, these slabs form a complete coffin of stone, in which the body originally reposed ; and this arrangement, with the silicious nature of the soil, has probably preserved the remains a longer period than would otherwise have been the case. But the circumstance respecting [211] these ancient graves which chiefly excited my astonishment was their marvellous littleness, none of them exceeding a length of four feet; and the wondrous tales of a "pigmy race of aborigines" once inhabiting the West, which I

had often listened to, recurred with considerable force to my memory. Resolved to decide this long-mooted question to my own satisfaction, if possible, the earth from one of the graves, the most perfect to be found, was excavated with care, and upon the bottom were discovered the *femur* and *tibia* of a skeleton in a state of tolerable preservation, being parallel to each other and in immediate proximity. Proof incontestible, this, that the remains were those of no Lilliputian race four feet in stature, and affording a fair presumption that the limbs were forcibly bent in this position at the time of burial, occupying their stone coffin much as the subject for scientific dissection occupies a beef-barrel. In this manner may we satisfactorily account for the ancient "pigmy cemetery" near the town of Fenton, on the Merrimack in Missouri, as well as that on the *Rivière des Pères*, in the same vicinity, already referred to, and those reported to exist in various other sections of the West, in which, owing to the dampness of the soil, the remains have been long resolved to dust, and only the dimensions of the grave have remained.[65]

Among the articles which my host had procured from these old graves, and deemed worthy of preservation, was a singular species of pottery, composed, as appeared from its fracture, of shells calcined and pulverized, mixed with an equal quantity [212] of clay, and baked in the sun. The clay is of that fine quality with which the waters of the Missouri are charged. The vessels are found moulded into a variety of forms and sizes, capable of containing from a quart to a gallon.[66] One of these, which my host

---

[65] For further information on the pigmy cemetery in the Meramec, see our volume xxvi, p. 105.— Ed.

[66] Mr. Flint's remarks respecting the Ancient Pottery found in the West coincides so well with the result of my own more limited observation, that I subjoin them in preference to extended description myself. Preceding these remarks is an

insisted upon hanging upon the bow of my Spanish saddle as I mounted, was fashioned in the shape of a *turtle*, with the form and features very accurately marked. The handle of the vessel, which was broken off, once formed a tapering tail to the animal, presenting a *rare* specimen of a turtle with that elegant appendage.

Ascending the bluffs by a tortuous though toilsome path-

---

interesting notice of the Lilliputian graves on the Merrimac, to which allusion has several times been made.

"At the time the Lilliputian graves were found on the Merrimac, in the county of St. Louis, many people went from that town to satisfy their curiosity by inspecting them. It appears from Mr. Peck that the graves were numerous; that the coffins were of stone; that the bones in some instances were nearly entire; that the length of the bodies was determined by that of the coffins which they filled, and that the bodies in general could not have been more than from three feet and a half to four feet in length. Thus it should seem that the generations of the past in this region were mammoths and pigmies.

"I have examined the pottery, of which I have spoken above, with some attention. It is unbaked, and the glazing very incomplete, since oil will soak through it. It is evident, from slight departure from regularity in the surface, that it was moulded by the hand and not by anything like our lathe. The composition, when fractured, shows many white floccules in the clay that resemble fine snow, and this I judge to be pulverized shells. The basis of the composition appears to be the alluvial clay carried along in the waters of the Mississippi, and called by the French 'terre grasse,' from its greasy feel. Samples of this pottery, more or less perfect, are shown everywhere on the river. Some of the most perfect have been dug from what are called the ' chalk-banks,' below the mouth of the Ohio. The most perfect that I have seen, being, in fact, as entire as when first formed, was a vessel in my possession. It was a drinking jug, like the 'scyphus' of the ancients. It was dug from the chalk-bank. It was smooth, well-moulded, and of the colour of common gray stoneware. It had been rounded with great care, and yet, from slight indentations on the surface, it was manifest that it had been so wrought in the palm of the hand. The model of the form was a simple and obvious one — the bottle-gourd — and it would contain about two quarts. This vessel had been used to hold animal oil; for it had soaked through, and varnished the external surface. Its neck was that of a squaw, known by the clubbing of the hair, after the Indian fashion. The moulder was not an accurate copyist, and had learned neither statuary nor anatomy; for, although the finish was fine, the head was monstrous. There seemed to have been an intention of wit in the outlet. It was the horrible and distorted mouth of a savage, and in drinking you would be obliged to place your lips in contact with those of madam the squaw."— *Flint's Recollections*, p. 173-4.— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. For bibliography on Indian antiquities, see our volume xxvi, p. 69, note 33; p. 159, note 111; and p. 184, note 128.

way through the ravines, my route for some miles wound away through a sparse growth of oaks, and over a region which seemed completely excavated into *sink-holes*. Some of these tunnel-shaped hollows were several hundred feet in diameter, and of frightful depth, though of regular outline, as if formed by the whirl of waters subsiding to the level of the plain beneath. They were hundreds in number, yet each was as uniformly circular as if excavated by scientific skill. I have met with none so regular in outline, though I have seen many in the course of my journeyings.

The puissant little village of Waterloo furnished me a very excellent dinner, at a very excellent tavern. The town appeared, from a hasty view in passing through its streets, remarkable for nothing so much as for the war-like *soubriquet* attached to it, if we except a huge *windmill*, which, [213] like a living thing, flings abroad its gigantic arms, and flaunts its ungainly pinions in the midst thereof. The place, moreover, can boast a courthouse, indicative of its judicial character as seat of justice for the county of Monroe; and, withal, is rather pleasantly located than otherwise. About five miles north of the village is situated a large spring, and a settlement called Bellefontaine. This spot is celebrated as the scene of some of the bloodiest atrocities of the Kickapoo Indians and predatory bands of other tribes some fifty years since. Many of the settlers were killed, and others carried into a captivity scarce to be preferred.[67]

---

[67] Waterloo, in Monroe County, about thirty miles northwest of Kaskaskia, was incorporated in 1848. In 1818 George Forquer purchased the land on which the village now stands, and in the same year he and Daniel P. Cook (later a member of Congress) laid out and named the town. In 1825 the county seat was changed from Harrisonville to Waterloo. About 1830, John Coleman erected a large wind-mill, later changed to an ox-mill (1837).

Bellefontaine is the name applied by the early French to a large spring a mile

An evening ride of a dozen miles, interesting for nothing but a drenching shower, succeeded by a glare of scorching sunshine, which, for a time, threatened perfect fusion to the traveller, or, more properly, an unconditional resolution into fluidity; such an evening ride, under circumstances aforesaid, brought me at sunset to the town of Columbia, a place, as its name denotes, redolent of patriotism.[68] "Hail Columbia!" was the exhilarated expression of my feelings, if not of my lips, as I strode across the threshold of a log-cabin, the appertenance of a certain worthy man with one leg and the moiety of another, who united in his calling the professions of cobbler and publican, as intimated by the sign-board over his door. Hail Columbia! All that it is possible to record touching this patriotic village seems to be that it adds one more to the five hundred previous villages of the selfsame appellation scattered over the land, whose chief [214] consequence, like that of a Spanish grandee, is concentrated and consists in a title. Every county of almost every state of the Union, it is verily believed, can boast a Columbia. Indeed, the name of the Genoese seems in a fair way of being honoured as much as is that of George Washington; a distinction we are sure to find bestowed upon every bullet-pated, tow-haired little rascal, who, knowing not who his father was, can claim no patronymic less general, having been smuggled into the world nobody can tell when or how: George Washington, "*Father* of his *country*,"

---

south of the present site of Waterloo. In 1782 Captain James Moore, who had served under George Rogers Clark, settled at this spring, and in accordance with orders from the Virginia government built a blockhouse fort as a protection against the Indians. Owing to his tact and good judgment, amicable relations with the Indians were maintained until 1786, when serious trouble really began. During the next decade the Indians killed several whites.— Ed.

[68] Columbia, eight miles north of Waterloo, and fifteen miles south of St. Louis, was laid out in 1820 on land belonging to Louis Nolan.— Ed.

indeed, if the perpetration of a very poor pun on a venerated name may be pardoned.

The earliest peep of dawn lighted me into the saddle; for, with the unhappy Clarence, *feelingly* could I ejaculate,

"Oh, I have pass'd a miserable night!"

In sober sadness, sleep, gentle sleep, had visited not my eyes, nor slumber mine eyelids; though, with the faith of a saint and the perseverance of a martyr, I had alternated from *bed* to board and from *board* to bed. And throughout that livelong night, be it recorded, even until the morning dawned, did a concert of whippoorwills and catydids keep up their infernal oratorio, seemingly for no other reason than for my own especial torment; until, sinner as I am, I could not but believe myself assoilzed of half the peccadilloes of a foregone life. Happy enough to find myself once more in the saddle, the morning breeze, as I cantered through the forest, fanned [215] freshly a brow fevered by sleeplessness and vexation. The early beams of the day-god were flinging themselves in lengthened masses far athwart the plains at my feet as I stood upon the bluffs. Descending, I was once more upon the AMERICAN BOTTOM.[69] This name, as already stated, was a distinction appropriated to that celebrated tract so long since as when it constituted the extreme limit in this direction of the Northwestern Territory. Extending northwardly from the embouchure of the Kaskaskia to the confluence of the great rivers, a distance of about one hundred miles, and embracing three hundred thousand acres of land, of fertility unrivalled, it presents, perhaps, second only to the Delta of Egypt, the most remarkable tract of country known. Its breadth varies from three miles to seven. Upon one side it is bounded by a heavy

[69] With reference to the American Bottom, see Ogden's *Letters from the West*, in our volume xix, p. 62, note 48.— ED.

strip of forest a mile or two deep, skirting the Mississippi; and upon the other by an extended range of bluffs, now rising from the plain in a mural escarpment of several hundred feet, as at the village of Prairie du Rocher, and again, as opposite St. Louis, swelling gracefully away into rounded sand-heaps, surmounted by Indian graves. At the base of the latter are exhaustless beds of bituminous coal, lying between parallel strata of limestone.[70] The area between the timber-belt and the bluffs is comprised in one extended meadow, heaving in alternate waves like the ocean after a storm, and interspersed with island-groves, sloughs, bayous, lagoons, and shallow lakes. These expansions of water are numerous, and owe their origin [216] to that geological feature invariable to the Western rivers — the superior elevation of the immediate bank of the stream to that of the interior plain. The subsidence of the spring-floods is thus precluded; and, as the season advances, some of the ponds, which are more shallow, become entirely dry by evaporation, while others, converted into marshes, stagnate, and exhale *malaria* exceedingly deleterious to health. The poisonous night-dews caused by these marshes, and the miasm of their decomposing and putrefying vegetation, occasion, with the sultriness of the climate, bilious intermittents, and the far-famed, far-dreaded "*fever and ague*," not unfrequently terminating in consumption. This circumstance, indeed, presents the grand obstacle to the settlement of the American Bottom. It is one, however, not impracticable to obviate at slight expense, by the construction of sluices and canals communicating with the rivers, and by the clearing up and cultivation of the soil. The salubrious influence of the latter expedient upon the climate has, indeed, been satisfactorily tested during the ten or twelve years past;

[70] See our volume xxvi, p. 263, note 163.— Ed.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

and this celebrated alluvion now bids fair, in time, to become the garden of North America. A few of its lakes are beautiful water-sheets, with pebbly shores and sparkling waves, abounding with fish. Among these is one appropriately named "Clear Lake," or the *Grand Marais*, as the French call it, which may be seen from St. Louis of a bright morning, when the sunbeams are playing upon its surface, or at night when the moon is at her full. The [217] earliest settlements of the Western Valley were planted upon the American Bottom, and the French villagers have continued to live on in health among the sloughs and marshes, where Americans would most assuredly have perished. Geologically analyzed, the soil consists of a silicious or argillaceous loam, as sand or clay forms the predominating constituent. Its fertility seems exhaustless, having continued to produce corn at an average of seventy-five bushels to the acre for more than a hundred years in succession, in the neighbourhood of the old French villages, and without deterioration. Maize seems the appropriate production for the soil; all of the smaller grains, on account of the rank luxuriance of their growth, being liable to *blast* before the harvesting.

Cahokia, Ill.

XLI

"Gramercy, Sir Traveller, it marvels me how you can carry between one pair of shoulders the weight of your heavy wisdom. Alack, now! would you but discourse me of the wonders you saw ayont the antipodes!"

"Peace, ignoramus! 'tis too good for thy ass's ears to listen to. The world shall get it, caxtonized in a GREAT BOOK."— *Traveller and Simpleton.*

> "Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been;
> A sound which makes us linger — yet — farewell!"
>
> *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.*

Of the alluvial character of the celebrated American Bottom there can exist no doubt. Logs, shells, fragments

of coal, and pebbles, which have been subjected to the abrasion of moving water, are found at a depth of thirty feet from the surface; and the soil throughout seems of unvarying fecundity. Whether this alluvial deposition is to be considered the result of annual floods of the river for ages, or whether the entire bottom once formed the bed of a vast lake, in which the waters of the Mississippi and Missouri mingled on their passage to the Gulf, is a question of some considerable interest. The latter seems the more plausible theory. Indeed, the ancient existence of an immense lake, where now lies the American Bottom, upon the east side of the Mississippi, and the Mamelle Prairie upon the west side, extending seventy [219] miles northwardly from the mouth of the Missouri where the Bottom ends, appears geologically demonstrable. The southern limit of this vast body of water seems to have been at that remarkable cliff, rising from the bed of the Mississippi about twenty miles below the outlet of the Kaskaskia, and known as the "Grand Tower." There is every indication from the torn and shattered aspect of the cliffs upon either side, and the accumulation of debris, that a grand parapet of limestone at this point once presented a barrier to the heaped-up waters, and formed a cataract scarcely less formidable than that of Niagara. The elevation of the river by this obstacle is estimated at one hundred and thirty feet above the present ordinary water-mark. For more than an hundred miles before reaching this point, the Mississippi now rolls through a broad, deep valley, bounded by an escarpment of cliffs upon either side; and, wherever these present a bold façade to the stream, they are grooved, as at the *cornice-rocks*, by a series of parallel lines, distinctly traced and strikingly uniform. As the river descends, these water-grooves gradually rise along the heights, until, at the Grand Tower,

they attain an altitude of more than an hundred feet; below this point the phenomenon is not observed.[71] This circumstance, and the disruption of the cliffs at the same elevation, clearly indicate the former surface of the lake. Organic remains, petrifactions of madrepores, corallines, concholites, and other fossil testacea, are found imbedded in a stratum [220] nearly at the base. Similar phenomena of the water-lines exist upon the cliffs of the Ohio, and a barrier is thought once to have obstructed the stream at a point called *the Narrows*, sixty miles below Louisville, with the same result as upon the Mississippi. The eastern boundary of the expansion of the latter stream must have been the chain of bluffs now confining the American Bottom in that direction, and considered a spur of the Ozark Mountains. This extends northeasterly to the "confluence;" thence, bending away to the northwest, it reaches the Illinois, and forms the eastern bank of that river. Upon the western side, the hills along the Missouri are sufficiently elevated to present a barrier to the lake until they reach the confluence of the rivers. At this point spreads out the Mamelle Prairie, sixty or seventy miles in length,

[71] The passage subjoined relative to the *Geological Transformations* which have taken place in the Mississippi Valley, is extracted from "Schoolcraft's Travels in its central portions," and will be found abundantly to corroborate my own observations upon the subject.

"It seems manifest, from various appearances, that the country we have under consideration has been subjected to the influence of water at a comparatively recent period; and it is evident that its peculiar alluvial aspect is the distinct and natural result of the time and the mode in which these waters were exhausted. One striking fact, which appears to have escaped general observation, is, that at some former period there has been an obstruction in the channel of the Mississippi at or near Grand Tower, producing a stagnation of the current at an elevation of about one hundred and thirty feet above the present ordinary water-mark. This appears evident from the general elevation and direction of the hills, which, for several hundred miles above, are separated by a valley from twenty to twenty-five miles wide, which now deeply imbosoms the current of the Mississippi. Wherever these hills disclose rocky and precipitous fronts, a series of distinctly-marked antique water-lines are to be observed. These water-lines preserve a parallel-

and, upon an average, five or six in breadth. West of this plain, the lake was bounded by the range of bluffs commencing with the celebrated "Mamelles," and stretching north until they strike the river; while the gradual elevation of the country, ascending the Upper Mississippi, presented a limit in that direction.

The event by which this great lake was drained appears to have been of a character either convulsive or volcanic, or to have been the result of the long-continued abrasion of the waters, as at Niagara. The rocks at the Grand Tower are limestone of secondary formation — the stratum being several hundred feet in depth, and imbedding hornstone and marine petrifactions throughout. They [221] everywhere exhibit indications of having once been subjected to the attrition of rushing water, as do the cliffs bounding the Northern lakes, which have long been chafed by the waves. The evidence of volcanic action, or violent subterranean convulsion of some kind, caused by heat, seems hardly less evident. The former workings of a divulsive power of terrific energy is betrayed, indeed, all over this region. In the immediate vicinity of the Grand Tower, which may be considered the scene of its most fearful operations, huge masses of shattered rock, dipping

ism which is very remarkable, and, what we should expect to find, constantly present their greatest depression towards the sources of the river. At Grand Tower they are elevated about one hundred and thirty feet above the summit level, at which elevation we observe petrifactions of madrepores and various other fossil organic remains which belong to this peculiar era. Here the rocks of dark-coloured limestone, which pervade the country to so great an extent, project towards each other as if they had once united; but, by some convulsion of nature, or, what is still more probable, by the continued action of the water upon a secondary rock, the Mississippi has effected a passage through this barrier, and thus producing an exhaustion of the stagnant waters from the level prairie lands above."— *Schoolcraft's Travels*, p. 218, 219.— FLAGG.

Comment by Ed. This hypothesis, in the main formulated by H. R. Schoolcraft, is still in its general features accepted by many geologists. See also Elisée Reclus, *The Earth and its Inhabitants* (New York, 1893), article "North America," iii, pp. 224, 225.

in every direction, are scattered about; and the whole stratum for twenty miles around lies completely broken up. At the point in the range of bluffs where this confusion is observed to cease, the mural cliff rises abruptly to the altitude of several hundred feet, exhibiting along the façade of its summit deep water-lines and other evidence of having once constituted the boundary of a lake. At the base issues a large spring of fresh water, remarkable for a regular ebb and flow, like the tides of the ocean, once in twenty-four hours.[72] At this spot, also, situated in the southeastern extremity of St. Clair county, exists an old American settlement, commenced a century since, and called the "*Block-house*," from the circumstance of a stoccade fort for defence against the [222] Indians.[73] By a late geological *reconnoisance*, we learn that, from this remarkable *tide-spring* until we reach the Grand Tower, the face of the country has a depressed and sunken aspect, as if once the bed of standing water; and was evidently overlaid by an immense stratum of calcareous rock. A hundred square miles of this massive ledge have, by some tremendous convulsion of Nature, been thrown up and shattered in fragments. The confused accumu-

[72] A similar spring is said to issue from *debris* at the foot of the cliffs on the Ohio, in the vicinity of Battery Rock. Its stream is copious, clear, and cold, ebbing and flowing regularly once in six hours. This phenomenon is explained on the principle of the syphon. Similar springs are found among the Alps.— FLAGG.

[73] Flagg is somewhat mistaken concerning the age of the block-house settlement. Previous to 1800, the only American settlement in St. Clair County was Turkey Hill, which at that date numbered twenty souls. William Scott, the first settler, moved thither with his family from Kentucky in 1797, and became a permanent resident. About 1810, Nathaniel Hill, Joshua Perkins, Reuben Stubblefield, James and Reuben Lively, and Richard Bearley settled in the southeastern corner of St. Clair County, and for protection against the Indians built a block-house near the present city of Hillstown on Dosa Creek (a tributary of the Kaskaskia). The fort was later abandoned, and the settlers moved to other parts of the state. For a description of the fort, see *History of St. Clair County, Illinois* (Philadelphia, 1881), pp. 261, 262.— ED.

lation of debris is now sunken and covered with repeated strata of alluvial deposite. Evidence of all this is adduced from the circumstance that huge blocks of limestone are yet frequently to be encountered in this region, some of them protruding twenty or thirty feet above the surface. As we approach the Grand Tower — that focus, around which the convulsed throes of Nature seem to have concentrated their tremendous energy — the number and the magnitude of these massive blocks constantly increase, until, at that point, we behold them piled up in mountain-masses as if by the hand of Omnipotent might. Upon all this vast Valley of the West the terrible impress of Almighty power seems planted in characters too deep to be swept away by the effacing finger of time. We trace them not more palpably in these fearful results of the convulsions of Nature, agonized by the tread of Deity, than in the eternal flow of those gigantic rivers which roll their floods over this wreck of elements, or in those ocean-plains which, upon either side, in billowy grandeur heave away, wave after wave, till lost in the magnificence of [223] boundless extent. And is there nothing in those vast accumulations of organic fossils — spoils of the sea and the land — the collected wealth of the animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds, entombed in the heart of the everlasting hills — is there naught in all this to arouse within the reflecting mind a sentiment of wonder, and elicit an acknowledgment to the grandeur of Deity? Whence came these varied productions of the land and sea, so incongruous in character and so diverse in origin? By what fearful anarchy of elements were they imbedded in these massive cliffs? How many ages have rolled away since they were entombed in these adamantine sepulchres, from which Nature's convulsive throes in later times have caused the resurrection? To such inquiries

we receive no answer. The secrecy of untold cycles veils the reply in mystery. The *effect* is before us, but the *cause* rests alone with Omniscience.

How wonderful are the phenomena betrayed in the geological structure of our earth! And scarcely less so are the ignorance and the indifference respecting them manifested by most of our race. "It is marvellous," says the celebrated Buckland,[74] "that mankind should have gone on for so many centuries in ignorance of the fact, which is now so fully demonstrated, that so small a part of the present surface of the earth is derived from the remains of animals that constituted the population of ancient seas. Many extensive plains and massive mountains form, as it were, the great charnel-houses of preceding generations, in which the petrified exuviæ [224] of extinct races of animals and vegetables are piled into stupendous monuments of the operations of life and death during almost immeasurable periods of past time." "At the sight of a spectacle," says Cuvier,[75] "so impos-

[74] William Buckland (1784-1856), a distinguished English geologist, who was as well canon of Christ College, Oxford (1825), and dean of Westminster Abbey (1845), contributed many valuable papers to geological publications. The Royal Society's *Catalogue of Scientific Papers* shows that Buckland was the author of fifty-three memoirs. His most important publication, *Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology* (a Bridgewater thesis, 1836), attempts to prove by aid of science, "the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation."— Ed.

[75] George Leopold Crétien Frédéric Dagobert, baron de Cuvier (1769-1832), a French naturalist, was founder of the science of comparative anatomy. He was chosen as one of the original members of the Institute, organized in 1795. After holding various administrative offices under Napoleon, he was appointed (1814) a councilor of state, which position he held under Louis XVIII. In 1819 he was made president of the committee of the interior, and chancellor of the University of Paris. Louis Phillipe made him a peer of France. Cuvier's scientific work falls into three divisions — paleontology, systematic zoology, and comparative anatomy. He wrote extensively in all these fields, and in each achieved high recognition. Consult: Sarah Lee, *Memoirs of Baron Cuvier* (London, 1833), and Ducrotay de Blainville, *Cuvier et Geoffrey Saint Hilaire* (Paris, 1890).— Ed.

ing, so terrible as that of the wreck of animal life, forming almost the entire soil on which we tread, it is difficult to restrain the imagination from hazarding some conjectures as to the cause by which such great effects have been produced." The deeper we descend into the strata of the earth, the higher do we ascend into the archæological history of past ages of creation. We find successive stages marked by varying forms of animal and vegetable life, and these generally differ more and more widely from existing species as we go farther downward into the receptacle of the wreck of more ancient creations.

That centuries have elapsed since that war of elements by which the great lake of the Mississippi was drained of its waters, the aged forests rearing themselves from its ancient bed, and the venerable monuments resting upon the surface, satisfactorily demonstrate. Remains, also, of a huge animal of graminivorous habits, but differing from the mastodon, have, within a few years, been disinterred from the soil. The theory of the Baron Cuvier, that our earth is but the wreck of other worlds, meets with ample confirmation in the geological character of the Western Valley.

As to agricultural productions, besides those of the more ordinary species, the soil of the American Bottom, in its southern sections, seems eminently [225] adapted to the cultivation of cotton, hemp, and tobacco, not to mention the castor-bean and the Carolina potato. The tobacco-plant, one of the most sensitively delicate members of the vegetable family, has been cultivated with more than ordinary success; and a quantity inspected at New-Orleans a few years since was pronounced superior to any ever offered at that market.

As I journeyed leisurely onward over this celebrated tract, extensive and beautiful farms spread out them-

selves around me, waving in all the gorgeous garniture of early autumn. The prairie was carpeted with the luxuriant richness of the *golden rod*, and all the gaudy varieties of the *heliotrope* and *asters*, and the crimson-died leaves of the dwarf-sumach; while here and there upon the extended plain stood out in loneliness, like a landmark of centuries, one of those mysterious tombs of a departed race of which I have already said so much. Some of them were to be seen rearing up their summits from the hearts of extensive maize-fields, crowned with an exuberance of vegetation; and upon one of larger magnitude stood a white farmhouse, visible in the distance for miles down the prairie. The number of these ancient mounds upon the American Bottom is estimated at *three hundred*; far more than are to be found upon any other tract of equal extent.

At the old French village of *Prairie du Pont*,[76] situated upon a creek of the same name, I made the necessary tarry for some refreshment, upon which breakfast or dinner might have laid nearly equal [226] claim to bestow a name. The most striking circumstance which came under my observation during my delay at this place was a very novel mode of producing the metamorphosis of cream into butter pursued by these villagers; a manœuvre executed by beating the cream with a spoon in a shallow basin. This operation I beheld carried on by the dark-browed landlord, much to my ignorance and wonder, with not an idea of its nature, until the substance produced was placed upon the board before me, and called

[76] Prairie du Pont (Prairie Bridge), located upon a creek of the same name, was so christened for a log bridge which in early times crossed the creek at this point. The settlement was first made about 1760 by people from Cahokia who, according to tradition, fled thither from the floods; the site is ten or twelve feet higher than that of Cahokia. The Sulpician missionaries had built a mill there in 1754. In 1844 the place was nearly destroyed by floods.— Ed.

butter. Prairie du Pont is one of the dampest, filthiest, most disagreeably ruinous of all the old villages I have ever visited. A few miles to the north is situated Cahokia,[77] one of the earliest settlements in the state, and the ancient residence of the *Caoquias*, one of the tribes of the Illini Indians. The place is supposed to have been settled by the followers of La Salle during his second expedition to the West in 1683, on his return from the mouth of the Mississippi. More than a century and a half has since elapsed; and the river, which then washed the foot of the village, is now more than a mile distant. This removal commenced, we are told, shortly after the first settlement, and well exemplifies the arbitrary character of the Western waters. Formerly, also, a considerable creek, which yet retains the name of the village, passed through its midst, discharging itself into the Mississippi not far below. The outlet is now several miles higher up; and tradition attributes the change to the pique of an irritated villager, who, out of sheer spite to the old place and its inhabitants, [227] cut a channel from the creek to the river, and turned the waters from their ancient course.

As French immigration at Cahokia increased, the Indian tribe receded, until the last remnant has long since disappeared. Yet it is a singular fact in the history of this settlement, that, notwithstanding the savages were forced to abandon a spot endeared to them by protracted residence and the abundance of game in the neighbouring prairies and lakes, they have ever regarded their successors with feelings of unchanging friendliness. How different, under the same circumstances, was the fate of the settlements of Plymouth and Jamestown; and even

[77] For a short historical sketch of Cahokia, see A. Michaux's *Travels*, in our volume iii, p. 70, note 135. Flagg, in common with the earlier writers, places the date of Cahokia too early.— Ed.

here, no sooner did the American race appear among the French, than hostilities commenced.

For many years Cahokia, like old Kaskaskia, was the gathering-spot of a nomadic race of trappers, hunters, miners, voyageurs, engagés, *couriers du bois*, and adventurers, carrying on an extensive and valuable fur-trade with the Indian tribes of the Upper Mississippi. This traffic has long since been transferred to St. Louis, and the village seems now remarkable for nothing but the venerableness of age and decay. All the peculiarities of these old settlements, however, are here to be seen in perfection. The broad-roofed, whitewashed, and galleried cottage; the picketed enclosure; the kitchen garden; the peculiar costumes, customs, poverty, ignorance, and indolence of the race, are here met, precisely as has more than once already been described in these volumes. Here, too, is the gray old Catholic church, in which service is still regularly [228] performed by the officiating priest. Connected with it is now a nunnery and a seminary of education for young ladies. The villagers still retain their ancient activity of heel and suppleness of elbow; and not a week is suffered to pass without a merry-making and a dance. The old "common field" is still under cultivation; and, uncurtailed of its fair proportions, stretches away up the bottom to the village opposite St. Louis. This valuable tract, held in common by the villagers of Cahokia and Prairie du Pont, has been confirmed to them by act of Congress; and, so long since as fifty years, four hundred acres adjoining the former village were, by special act, granted to each family.[78] The number of

[78] By act of Congress approved March 1, 1791, "a tract of land including the villages of Cohos [Cahokia], and Prairie du Pont, and heretofore used by the inhabitants of the said village as a common," was, "appropriated to the use of the inhabitants . . . to be used by them as a common, until otherwise disposed of by law." By the same act, four hundred acres were ordered to be laid out,

families is now, as has been the case this century past, about fifty, neither diminishing nor increasing. Very few of the inhabitants are of American origin, and these are liable to annual attacks of fever, owing to the damp site of the place and the noxious effluvia of the numerous marshes in the vicinity. Upon the French villagers these causes of disease exert no effect, favourable or unfavourable. A few acres of corn; a log cabin; a few swarthy responsibilities, and a few cattle; a cracked fiddle, and a few cart-loads of prairie-grass-hay in autumn, seems the very ultimatum of his heart to covet or his industry to obtain.

The road from Cahokia to the city, inasmuch as it is not often conscious of a more dignified equipage than the rude market-cart of the French villager, is of no wonderful celebrity for breadth, or uniformity of track, or excellence of structure. It extends [229] along the bank of the Mississippi, and is shaded on either side by the strip of forest which skirts the margin. After a tarry of several hours at Cahokia, and an excursion among the mounds of the neighbouring prairie, near sunset I found myself approaching "Illinois-town," opposite St. Louis.[79] It was the calm, soft evening hour; and, as I now advanced briskly over the prairie, the cool breeze was whispering among the perfumed grass-tops, and "night's silvery

and "given to each of those persons who in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty-three were heads of families at Vincennes, or in the Illinois country, on the Mississippi, and who, since that time, have moved from one of the said places to the other."— ED.

[79] In 1815 Etienne Pinçoneau (now spelled Pensoneau) laid out a town on the present site of East St. Louis, and named it Jacksonville. His efforts proving unsuccessful, he sold the land to McKnight and Brady, who in May, 1818, platted the site and named it Illinoistown. During the succeeding autumn, the citizens of Cahokia appointed five agents to lay out a town site on the Cahokia commons. Illinois City thus came into existence, and the action of the citizens was legalized by Congress (May 1, 1820). Illinoistown, Illinois City, and other small villages were later united to form East St. Louis, which was incorporated in 1861 and chartered four years later.— ED.

veil" was slowly gathering along the retreating landscape. The sun went down like a monarch, robed in purple, and the fleecy clouds which had formed his throne rolled themselves in rich luxuriance along the horizon, suffused in the beautiful carmine of the heavens. At intervals an opening in the forest laid bare the scene of splendour as I hastened onward, and then all was dusk again. Winding among the group of mounds reposing in the deepening twilight, and penetrating the grove of pecans, the moon was just beginning to gild the gliding wave at my feet as my horse stood out upon the bank of the stream. Clear and distinct beyond, against the crimson back-ground of the evening sky, were cut the towers, and cupolas, and lofty roofs of the city; while in front, the lengthened line of white warehouses gleamed from the shade along the curving shore: and the eye, as it glanced up the far-retreating vistas of the streets, caught a glimpse of deeper glories along the narrow zone of horizon beyond. The broad sheet which I was now crossing seemed, with the oily gliding of its ripples, completely died in the tender roseate of the [230] sunset sky. As the shades of evening deepened into night, one after another these delicate hues faded gently away: and the moonlight streamed in full floods of misty magnificence far over the distant forests; the evening-bells of the city pealed out merrily over the waters; the many lights of the steamers cheerfully twinkled along the landing; and, as the last faint glimmer of day had gone out, and night had resumed her sable reign, I found myself once more amid the "crowd and shock of men," threading the long, dusty streets of St. Louis. . . .

GENTLE READER, the tale is told — our task is ended —

> " And what is writ, is writ;
> Would it were worthier!"

Our pilgrimage is over, fellow-wanderer. Full many a bright day have we trod together the green prairies, and glided over the far-winding waters of the fair Valley. Together have we paused and pondered beside the mysterious mausoleum of a race departed. We have lingered among the time-stained dwellings of an ancient and peculiar people, and with kindling interest have dwelt upon the early chronicles and the wild legends of the "far off," beautiful West. But autumn is upon us — shadowy autumn, dark on the mountain-brow. Her purple mistiness is deepening over the distant landscape; and the chill rustle of her evening wind, in melancholy whisperings, wanders among the pennoned [231] grass-tops. Our pilgrimage ceases, yet with no unmingled emotions do I say to thee "*pax vobiscum*!"

> " Ye! who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene
> Which is his last, if in your memories dwell
> A *thought* which once was his, if on ye swell
> A *single* recollection, not in vain
> He wore his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell:
> Farewell!"

St. Louis, Oct., 1837.

De Smet's Letters and Sketches, 1841-1842

Reprint of original English edition: Philadelphia, 1843

IHS
A. St Ignace.
Le désert reconnoissant.

LETTERS AND SKETCHES:

WITH

A NARRATIVE OF A YEAR'S RESIDENCE

AMONG

THE INDIAN TRIBES

OF

The Rocky Mountains.

BY

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

Philadelphia:

PUBLISHED BY M. FITHIAN, 61 N. SECOND STREET.

1843.

PREFACE

To those who love their country, and their fellow men, we present this interesting Narrative, with the hope, we might say, the certainty, that its perusal will afford them some moments of the purest gratification. We have seldom met any thing more entertaining. Its simple, manly eloquence enchants the attention. The facts it makes known to us of the "far, far West," the dispositions and habits of the Indian Tribes who roam over the vast region of the Oregon, their present state and future prospects, are such as cannot fail to awaken lively interest in all who love to look around them beyond the narrow horizon of every-day scenes, and learn what the holy servants of God are doing for His sake and in His name in distant parts of the world. We have conversed with the apostolic man from whose pen we receive this narrative; and as we listened we felt at once honoured and delighted to be so near one who in our days and in his own person brings before us that lofty spirit of missionary devotedness — those thrilling scenes of Indian life and adventure which we so much admire in the pages of Charlevoix and Bancroft.

[vi] Truly our country is full of interest to those who watch its progress, and compare it with the past. Who, for example, could have dreamt that the Iroquois, the savage Mohawk, — under which name we best know the tribe, and whose startling yell so often made our forefathers tremble,— would have been chosen to kindle the first faint sparks of civilization and Christianity among a large portion of the Indian tribes beyond the

Rocky Mountains? This is one of the singular facts which these pages present to us. They abound in others not less singular and interesting. Many of these Indian nations actually thirst after the waters of life — sigh for the day when the real " Long Gown" is to appear among them, and even send messengers thousands of miles to hasten his coming. Such longing after God's holy truth, while it shames our colder piety, should also enflame every heart to pray fervently that laborers may be found for this vast vineyard — and open every hand to aid the holy, self-devoted men, who, leaving home and friends and country, have buried themselves in these wilds with their beloved Indians, to live for them and God. One of their favourite plans at this moment is to introduce among them a taste for agriculture, with the means to pursue it. They believe it to be the speediest, perhaps the only way by which the Indians may be won from the wandering life they now [vii] in general lead and from the idle habits it engenders. To aid them in this philanthropic object is our sacred duty as men, as Americans, as Christians. It is at least one method of atonement for the countless wrongs which these unfortunate races have received from the whites. We should be grateful to have such an opportunity of doing good: let none suffer the occasion to pass unhonoured by some tribute to the noble cause — some evidence of their love for God, their country and their fellow man.

The frontispiece is from the pencil of one of the Indian Missionaries.

It blends the skill of the artist with the fancy of the poet, and will hardly be understood without a word of explanation. In the foreground we see several of the gigantic trees of the Oregon forests, fallen and crossing each other. On these repose two wolves, a squirrel and

several serpents. Above, two Indian chiefs, surnamed in baptism after the great Apostles of the Gentiles, Peter and Paul, are supporting a large basket of hearts,— an offering to heaven from the grateful wilderness. On the right are the emblems of Indian life and warfare: the bow and arrows, battle-axe and shield. Below and above these are seen some of the most remarkable animals of the country — the bear, the [viii] wild horse, the badger, the graceful antelope, intermingled with the plover, the pigeon, the wood-cock, the bittern, and other birds of the region. On the left are the peaceful symbols of Christianity — the Bible and the Cross, the chalice and altar lights — the anchor, symbol of faith and hope — the trumpet, to proclaim the word of God and bid the desert bless His holy name. Here too we behold several of the noble animals of the territory — the buffalo, the deer and elk, the mountain sheep and different birds. In the distance are seen on the right, Indian mounds, and a water-spout rising from the river Platte, and on the left, the Rocky Mountains surmounted by the Cross. Festoons, composed of the various flowers the Fathers have met on their way over mountains and prairies and through lonely vallies, complete the picture — the whole supported at the extremities by different birds of the country, and in the centre by the American eagle, — fit emblem, we may say, of their own dauntless faith, as well as of the heroic spirit of the nation within whose borders they have their principal station, and from whose genuine piety they have received the most consoling assurances of final success, viz: the Flat Head Indians and the Pends-d'oreilles, who are styled, even by their foes, the "nation of chiefs."

[ix] Once more we earnestly commend the noble cause of these devoted Missionaries to the charity of every

sincere Christian. The short time allowed to prepare the work for the press must be our apology for several imperfections or errors which may meet the eye of the reader.

BOOK I

Dies venit, dies tua
In qua reflorent omnia,
Lætemur et nos in viam,
Tua reducti dex-tera.

The days of spring are drawing near
When all thy flowers will re-appear,
And we redeemed by thy right hand,
Shall walk in gladness thro' the land.

LETTER I

St. Louis University, Feb. 4, 1841.

TO THE REV. F. J. B.

Rev. and Dear Sir:

I PRESUME you are aware, that in the beginning of last Spring, I was sent by the Right Rev. Bishop of St. Louis,[1] and my Provincial, on an exploring expedition to the Rocky Mountains, in order to ascertain the dispositions of the Indians, and the prospects of success we might have if we were to establish a mission among them. It is truly gratifying to me to have so favorable a report to make.— My occupations do not allow me to enter into all the details; I shall therefore be satisfied at present with giving you a brief sketch of my journey and its result.

I started from Westport on the 30th of April, in company with the Annual Expedition of the American Fur Company, which for this year had appointed the rendezvous on Green River, a tributary of the Rio Colorado of the West.[2]

[1] Father de Smet was sent on the mission to the Flathead Indians by Joseph Rosati. For an account of the latter, see Flagg's *Far West*, in our volume xxvi, p. 164, note 115.— ED.

[2] In 1821, Pierre Chouteau, Jr., of the American Fur Company, established a general agency in the bottom opposite Randolph Bluffs, about three miles below the present site of Kansas City. His buildings having been destroyed by a flood in 1826, he erected others on higher ground, in the present Guinott addition, near the foot of Walnut street. The place was called Chouteau's Warehouse, and soon became a favorite shipping point for the Indian trade. In 1831 John McCoy built a trading house at the crossing of the roads from Chouteau's Warehouse and Independence. Two years later he platted a town at this point and named it Westport. Westport first used Chouteau's Warehouse as a landing place, but later built a wharf on the high rocky bank of the river, at the present foot of Grand Avenue, Walnut, Main, and Delaware streets. Because of superior natural advantages, this latter place soon became the principal landing, and in 1838 a company purchased the site, platted a town, and named it Kansas City. Westport thus became the starting point for the caravans to the Western country.

Captain Dripps, who commanded the caravan, treated me on all occasions with the most polite attention.[3] On the 6th day of our journey I was seized with the fever and ague, and have been subject to it for nearly five months. Nothing particularly worth noticing, occurred during the journey, except, when we halted in the village of the Sheyennes.[4] I was introduced to the Chiefs as a minister of the Great [14] Spirit: they showed me great deference, and I was invited to a feast. I had to pass at first through all the ceremonies of the calumet; the great chief approached me to shake hands, and gave me a heartfelt "How do you do." — "Blackgown," said he, "my heart was filled with joy when I learned who you were. My lodge never received a visitor for whom I feel a greater esteem. As soon as I was apprised of your coming, I ordered my great kettle to be filled, and in your honor, I commanded that my three fattest dogs should be served up."

Prior to 1822, the overland expeditions seem to have been composed of men on foot carrying their wares in packs. Later, pack horses were substituted, and by 1830 wagons were used almost exclusively. Owing to the dangers from hostile Indians, the traders going to Santa Fé or points in the Rocky Mountains formed themselves into caravans for mutual protection, with an organized system of guards and camps. See Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies*, in our volume xix, pp. 198-201, for a description of these caravans.— Ed.

[3] Andrew Drips was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania (1789), went west, and with eight other St. Louis men formed the Missouri Fur Company (1820). He was later a member of the independent firm of Fontenelle and Drips. When the American Fur Company began their westward expansion, Drips entered into their employ, having charge after 1836 of annual expeditions to the mountains. In 1842, the company having encountered strong opposition, the federal government was prevailed upon to revive the office of Indian agent. Drips served four years as agent to the Sioux of the upper Missouri, with an annual salary of $1500. In this capacity, Drips rendered valuable service to the company. Upon the expiration of his term of office, he re-entered the company's employment, in which he continued until his death at Kansas City, Missouri (1860). He married a woman of the Oto Indian nation. Their daughter, Mrs. William Mulkey of Kansas City, has in her possession many of her father's valuable papers. See H. M. Chittenden, *American Fur-Trade of the Far West* (New York, 1902).— Ed.

[4] For a sketch of the Cheyenne, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 140, note 88.— Ed.

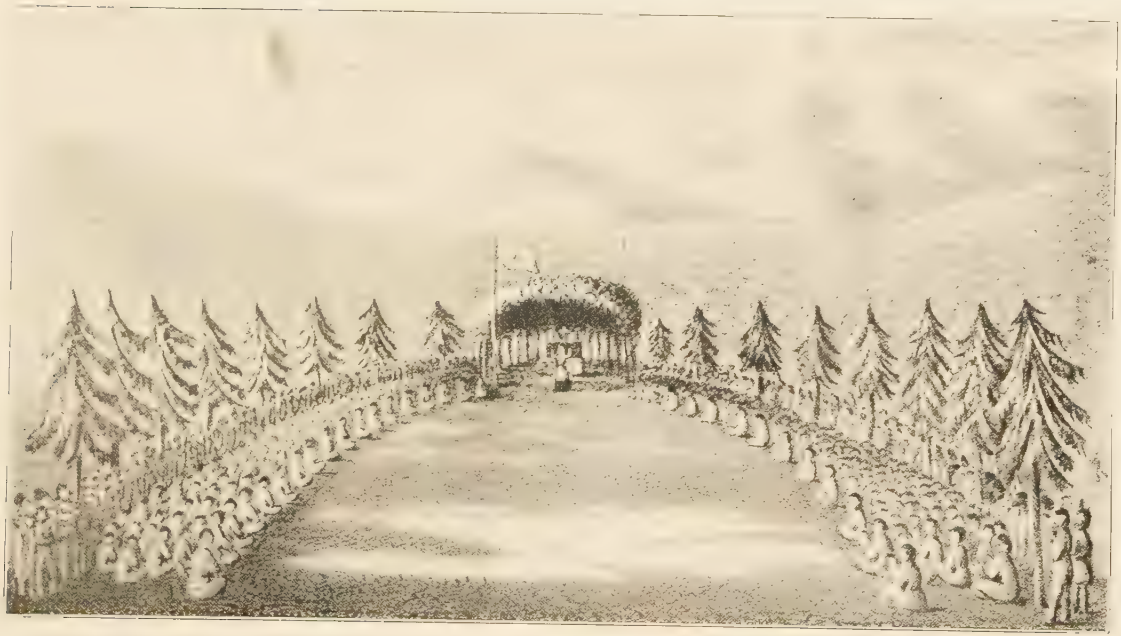
The bravest warriors of the nation partook of the repast, and I availed myself of the opportunity to explain to them the most important tenets of Christianity. I told them the object of my visit, and enquired whether they would not be satisfied to have also Black-gowns among them, who would teach them to love and serve the Great Spirit, as he wished. "Oh yes," they eagerly answered, "we will gladly provide for every thing that they stand in need of; they will not die of hunger amongst us." I have no doubt but a zealous missionary would do a great deal of good among them. They are about two thousand in number. Their language, it is said, is very difficult. On the 30th of June we arrived at the rendezvous.[5] An escort of warriors had been provided for me by the Flat-heads. Our meeting was that of children who come to meet their parent, and in the effusion of their heart, they bestowed upon me the fondest names with a simplicity truly patriarchal. They told me of all the interesting particulars of their nation, and of the wonderful preservation of sixty of their men, in a battle against two hundred Black-feet, which lasted five whole days, and in which they killed fifty of their enemies, without losing a single man of their number. "The Great Spirit watched over them;" they said, "he knew that we were to guide you to [15] our camp, and he wanted to clear the road of all the obstacles that you might have found on your way. We trust we will not be annoyed any more by the Black-feet; they went off weeping like women." We thanked heaven for the signal preservation, and implored

[5] The rendezvous in 1840 was held in the upper valley of Green River, near Fort Bonneville, in western Wyoming. Near the headwaters of the Missouri, Columbia, and Colorado rivers, this place was a natural and well-known meeting point. For a description of Green River, see Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 60, note 38; for the rendezvous at this place in 1834, see Townsend's *Narrative*, in the same volume, p. 192, note 40.— Ed.

its assistance for the new and perilous journey we were on the point of undertaking. The Indians of different nations and the trappers, had assembled at the rendezvous in great numbers, for the sake of the trade. On Sunday, the fifth of July, I had the consolation of celebrating the holy sacrifice of Mass *sub dio*. The altar was placed on an elevation, and surrounded with boughs and garlands of flowers; I addressed the congregation in French and in English, and spoke also by an interpreter to the Flat-head and Snake Indians. It was a spectacle truly moving for the heart of a Missionary, to behold an assembly composed of so many different nations, who all assisted at our holy mysteries with great satisfaction. — The Canadians sung hymns in French and Latin, and the Indians in their native tongue. It was truly a Catholic worship. . . . This place has been called since that time, by the French Canadians, *la prairie de la Messe*.

About thirty of the principal chiefs of the Snake Indians invited me to a council.[6] I explained to them the christian doctrine in a compendious manner — they were all very attentive — they then deliberated among themselves for about half an hour, and one of the chiefs, addressing me in the name of the others, said: "Black-gown, the words of thy mouth have found their way to our hearts; they never will be forgotten. Our country is open for thee; come to teach us what we have to do, to please the Great Spirit, and we will do according to thy words." I advised them to select among themselves a wise and prudent man, who, every morning and evening, should assemble them to offer [16] to Almighty God their prayers and supplications; that there the good

[6] For a sketch of the Snake Indians, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 227, note 123.— Ed.



Worship in the Desert

chiefs should have an opportunity of exhorting their warriors to behave as they ought. The meeting was held the very same evening, and the great chief promulgated a law, that for the future, the one who would be guilty of theft, or of any other disorderly act, should receive a public castigation. On Monday, 6th, we proceeded on our journey.[7] A dozen Canadians wished to accompany me, to have an opportunity, as they said, to practise their religion. Eight days afterwards we arrived safely in the camp of the Flat-heads, and Ponderas, or Pends d'oreilles.[8]

Immediately the whole village was in commotion; men, women and children, all came to meet me, and shake hands, and I was conducted in triumph to the lodge of the great chief Tjolizhitzay, (the Big face.) He has the appearance of an old patriarch. Surrounded by the principal chiefs of the two tribes, and the most renowned warriors, he thus addressed me: "This day

---

[7] In the *Voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses*, De Smet says, "on the 4th of July, I resumed my travels, with my Flatheads."— ED.

[8] Flathead was a term applied to various tribes of Indians who were supposed to practice the custom of flattening the heads of their infants. A division of the Choctaw was known by this name. The tribe here referred to belonged to the Salishan stock; see Franchère's *Narrative*, in our volume vi, p. 340, note 145. They were not in the habit of flattening the head, and the origin of their cognomen is unknown. The specific tribe visited by De Smet dwelt along the lake and river which bear their name, with their chief centre in the Bitterroot Valley. By the treaty of 1855 they ceded to the government an extensive tract of land in this region, being nearly two degrees in width and extending from near the forty-second parallel to the British line. In November, 1871, the president issued an order for their removal from Bitterroot Valley to the Jocko reservation. Arrangements were further completed by the article of agreement of August 27, 1872. After considerable delay they removed thither, and together with the Pend d'Oreille and Kutenai, kindred tribes, still inhabit the reservation. See Peter Ronan, *Historical Sketch of the Flathead Indian Nation* (Helena, 1890).

The Pend d'Oreille (Ear-ring) Indians, whose native name was Kalispel, were kindred to the Flathead, speaking a similar dialect. Their habitat lay northwest of the Flathead proper, upon the Idaho lake and its tributary river bearing their name.— ED.

Kaikolinzosten (the Great Spirit) has accomplished our wishes, and our hearts are swelled with joy. Our desire to be instructed was so great, that three times had we deputed our people to the Great Black-gown[9] in St. Louis, to obtain a father. Now, Father, speak, and we will comply with all you will tell us. Show us the road we have to follow, to come to the place where the Great Spirit resides." Then he resigned his authority to me; but I replied that he mistook the object of my coming among them; that I had no other object in view, but their spiritual welfare; that with respect to temporal affairs, they should remain as they were, till circumstances should allow them to settle in a permanent spot.—Afterwards we deliberated on the hours proper for their [17] spiritual exercises and instructions. One of the chiefs brought me a bell, with which I might give the signal.

The same evening about 2,000 persons were assembled before my lodge to recite night prayers in common. I told them the result of my conference with the chiefs; of the plan of instructions which I intended to pursue; and with what disposition they ought to assist at them, etc. Night prayers having been said, a solemn canticle of praise of their own composition, was sung by these children of the mountains, to the Author of their being. It would be impossible for me to describe the emotions I felt at this moment; I wept for joy, and admired the marvellous ways of that kind Providence, who, in his infinite mercy, had deigned to depute me to this poor people, to announce to them the glad tidings of salvation. The next day I assembled the council, and with the assistance of an intelligent interpreter, I translated into their language the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary,

[9] The Bishop.— De Smet.

the Apostles' Creed, the ten Commandments, and four Acts. As I was in the habit of reciting these prayers, morning and evening, and before instructions, about a fortnight after, I promised a beautiful silver medal to the one who would recite them first. One of the chiefs rising immediately, "Father," said he, smiling, "that medal is mine," and he recited all the prayers without missing a word. I embraced him, praised the eagerness which he had evinced of being instructed, and appointed him my Cathecist. This good Indian set to work with so much zeal and perseverance, that in less than a fortnight all knew their prayers.

Every morning, at the break of day, the old chief is the first on horseback, and goes round the camp from lodge to lodge. " Now my children," he exclaims, " it is time to rise; let the first thoughts of your hearts be for the Great [18] Spirit; say that you love him, and beg of him to be merciful unto you. Make haste, our Father will soon ring the bell, open your ears to listen, and your hearts to receive the words of his mouth." Then, if he has perceived any disorderly act on the preceding day, or if he has received unfavorable reports from the other chiefs, he gives them a fatherly admonition. Who would not think, that this could only be found in a well ordered and religious community, and yet it is among Indians in the defiles and vallies of the Rocky Mountains ! ! ! You have no idea of the eagerness they showed to receive religious instruction. I explained the christian doctrine four times a day, and nevertheless my lodge was filled, the whole day, with people eager to hear more. At night I related those histories of the Holy Scriptures that were best calculated to promote their piety and edification, and as I happened to observe, that I was afraid of tiring them, "oh no," they replied, "if we were not

afraid of tiring you, we would gladly spend here the whole night."

I conferred the holy sacrament of Baptism on six hundred of them, and if I thought it prudent to postpone the baptism of others till my return, it was not for want of desire on their part, but chiefly to impress upon their minds a greater idea of the holiness of the sacrament, and of the dispositions that are required to receive it worthily. Among those baptised, were the two great chiefs of the Flat-heads and of the Ponderas. As I excited the catechumens to a heartfelt contrition of their sins, the *Walking Bear*, chief of the Ponderas, answered: "Father, I have been plunged for a number of years in profound ignorance of good and evil, and no doubt, during that time, I have often greatly displeased the Great Spirit, and therefore I must humbly beseech his pardon. But when I afterwards conceived [19] that a thing was bad, I banished it from my heart, and I do not recollect to have since deliberately offended the Great Spirit." Truly, where such dispositions are found, we may well conclude that a rich harvest is to be gathered.

I remained two months among these good people, and every day they were adding to my consolations, by their fervor in prayer, by their assiduity in coming to my instructions, and by their docility in putting into practice what they had been taught.

The season being far advanced, and as I had waited in vain for a safe opportunity to return to St. Louis, I resolved to commit myself entirely to Providence, and on the 7th of August,[10] I took leave of my dear Neophytes. I appointed one of the chiefs to replace me during my absence, who should preside in their evening and morning devotions, and on the Sabbath exhort them to virtue,

[10] Evidently a misprint for 27th of August. Consult the succeeding letter.— Ed.

baptize the little children, and those who were dangerously ill. Grief was depicted on the features of all, and tears were glistening in every eye. The old chief addressed me, saying, "Father, the Great Spirit accompany thee in thy long and dangerous voyage; every day, morning and evening, we will address to him our humble supplications, that thou mayest arrive safely among thy brethren. And we will continue to do so, till thou be again among thy children of the mountains. We are now like the trees that have been spoiled of their verdure by winter's blast. When the snow will have disappeared from these vallies, and the grass begins to grow, our hearts will begin to rejoice; when the plants will spring forth our joy will increase; when they blossom, it will still be greater, and then we will set out to meet you. Farewell, Father, farewell."

The Chiefs would not suffer me to depart by myself —[20] thirty of the bravest warriors were deputed as a safeguard to traverse the country of the Black-feet, who are very hostile to the whites, and they were instructed to accompany me, as far as need would be of their assistance. I resolved to take on my return a different route from the one I had taken in coming. I was induced to do so, in order to visit the Forts of the American Fur Company on the Missouri, and on the Yellow Stone, to baptize the children. After five or six days travelling, we fell in with a war party of the Crow Indians, who received us very kindly, and we travelled together for two days. Then we directed our course to the Big Horn,[11] the most considerable of the tributary streams

[11] For sketches of the Blackfeet and the Crows, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, pp. 225 and 226, notes 120, 121 respectively. In *Voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses*, De Smet says that this camp of Crows consisted of one thousand souls.

The Big Horn River, so called from the Rocky Mountain sheep, rises in the

of the Yellow Stone. There we met another party of the same nation, who were also amicably disposed towards us. As there was question about religion, I availed myself of the opportunity to express to them the main articles of the Christian faith, and as I was depicting in lively colors the torments of hell, and had told them that the Great Spirit had kindled this fire of his wrath, for those who did not keep the commandments I had explained to them, one of the Chiefs uttered a horrid shriek. "If this be the case," said he, "then I believe there are but two in the whole nation who will not go to that place; it is the Beaver and the Mink; they are the only Crows who never stole, who never killed, nor committed all the excesses which your law prohibits. Perhaps I am deceived, and then we must all go together." When I left them on the next day, the Chief put a fine bell on my horse's neck, and invited me to take a turn round the village. Next, he accompanied me for six miles.

After several days of a painful journey over rocks and cliffs, we arrived at last at the fort of the Crows.[12] It

Wind River range, near the centre of Wyoming, flows north through the Big Horn Mountains into Montana, and bending toward the northeast joins the Yellowstone as its principal tributary. South of the Big Horn Mountains, the stream is usually called Wind River. The Big Horn Valley, the home of the Crows, was a rich fur-bearing region and frequently visited by trappers and traders.— Ed.

[12] The post visited by Father de Smet was Fort Van Buren, located on the south bank of the Yellowstone, at the mouth of the Rosebud. It was built in 1835 by A. J. Tulloch for the American Fur Company, and stood until 1842, when it was burned by instructions from Charles J. Larpenteur, who at once ordered the erection of Fort Alexander, on the north side of the Yellowstone, twenty miles higher up. De Smet was mistaken when he said that Fort Van Buren was the first fort of the Yellowstone erected by the American Fur Company. Fort Cass was built by A. J. Tulloch in 1832 at the mouth of the Big Horn, but three years later was abandoned. The fourth and last fort erected in this region by the American Fur Company was Fort Sarpy, on the south side of this river, twenty-five miles below the old site of Fort Cass. Consult Major Frederick T. Wilson, "Old Fort Pierre and its Neighbors," with editorial notes by Charles E. De Land, in *South Dakota Hist. Colls.* (Aberdeen, S. D., 1902), i, pp. 259-379. — Ed.

is the first the American Fur Company possessed in that country. [21] My dear Flat-heads edified all the inhabitants by their fervor and their piety. As well in the fort, as on the road, we never missed performing in common, our evening and morning devotions, and singing canticles in honor of the Almighty. Frequently, during my stay with them, they had given me abundant proofs of their trust in Providence. I cannot forbear mentioning one instance that occurred during my travels in this place. One day as dinner was preparing and provisions scarce, a countryman of mine, who accompanied me, suggested the propriety of keeping something in reserve for supper. "Be not uneasy," said the chief, called Ensyla,[13] "I never missed my supper in my life. I trust in the mercy of the Great Spirit, he will provide for all our wants." We had just camped at night, when the chief killed two stags. "Did I not tell you right?" he remarked, smilingly, to my companion. "You see the Great Spirit does not only provide for our wants of this evening, but he gives us also a supply for to-morrow."

Now began the most difficult and most perilous part of our journey. I had to pass through a country supposed to be overrun by war parties, of the Black-feet, Assineboins, Gros Ventres, Arikaras, and Scioux.[14] All these

[13] Ensyla (Insula), sometimes called Little Chief because of his station, also named Red Feather from his official emblem, and christened Michael because of his faithfulness, was one of the most influential of the Flathead chiefs, and figures prominently in De Smet's work among the Indians of his tribe. In 1835 he had visited the rendezvous in Green River Valley, in the hope of securing missionary aid, and there met Samuel Parker and Marcus Whitman. See Samuel Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour among the Rocky Mountains* (Ithaca, 1838), p. 77. According to L. B. Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest* (Baltimore, 1894), Insula was disappointed not to find a "black robe," and preserved his tribe for Catholic missionaries. His integrity, judgment, and bravery made him highly esteemed.— Ed.

[14] For sketches of the Arikara and Sioux, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, pp. 113 and 90, notes 76 and 55 respectively; for the Assiniboin, see

nations entertained the most hostile dispositions towards the Flat-heads. I therefore dispensed with their services any farther. I again excited them to continue the good work they had begun; to be steadfast in their faith; regular in their devotions; charitable towards one another. I embraced them all and took my leave. Mr. John de Velder,[15] a native of Ghent in Belgium, had volunteered his services to me at the Rendezvous. In consideration of the bad state of my health, I deemed myself very happy to accept of them; he has never left me since. He was now to be my only travelling companion. As there is no road, we followed the direction of the river; at intervals we were [22] obliged to make immense circuits to avoid the steep and craggy hills that defied our passage. For two hundred miles, we had continually death before our eyes. On the second day, I discovered before daylight a large smoke at a distance of about a quarter of a mile. We hastily saddled our horses and following up a ravine we gained a high bluff unperceived. At night we did not dare to make fire for fear of attracting notice. Again about dinner time, we found on the road the carcase of a Buffalo, killed only two hours before; the tongue and the marrow bones with some other dainty pieces had been taken away. Thus the kind providence of our God took care to supply our wants.

We took a direction contrary to the tracks of the Indians, and spent a safe night in the cliffs of the rocks. The next day we struck upon a spot where forty lodges had been encamped, the fires were yet in full blaze.

Finally, we crossed the Missouri at the same place

Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 370, note 346; for the Gros Ventres, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 114, note 76.— Ed.

[15] For a more complete account of John de Velder, see succeeding letter.— Ed.

where, only an hour before, a hundred lodges of ill-minded Assineboins had passed, and we arrived safe and unmolested at Fort Union, situated a few miles above the mouth of the Yellow Stone. In all these Forts great harmony and union prevail; Mr. Kipps, the present administrator of them, is a gentleman well worthy of his station.[16] Every where I was treated by these gentlemen with the greatest politeness and kindness, and all my wants were liberally supplied. As I was relating the particulars of this dangerous trip to an Indian Chief, he answered: "The Great Spirit has his Manitoos; he has sent them to take care of your steps and to trouble the enemies that would have been a nuisance to you." A Christian would have said: Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.[17] [23] On 23d of September we set out for the village of the Mandans, in company with three men of the fort, who had the same destination. We met on the road a party of 19 Assineboins, who were returning to their country from an unsuccessful expedition against the Gros Ventres. Their looks indicated their bad intentions: although we were but five in number, we showed a determined countenance, and we passed unmolested. Next day we crossed a forest, the winter quarters of the Gros Ventres, and Arikaras, in 1835. It was there that those unfortunate tribes were nearly exterminated by the small pox. We saw their bodies wrapped up in Buffalo robes, tied to the branches of the largest trees. It was truly a sad and mournful spectacle. Two days later we met the miserable survivors of these unhappy tribes. Only ten

---

[16] For sketches of Fort Union and James Kipp (not Kipps), see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, pp. 373, 345, notes 349, 319 respectively.— Ed.

[17] "He has given his angels charge of thee, that they guard thee in all thy ways." — De Smet.

families of the Mandans, once such a powerful nation, now remain. They have united with the Gros Ventres and Arikaras. They received me with great demonstrations of friendship; I spent that night in their camp, and the next day crossed the Missouri in their canoe, made of a buffalo skin.[18] The next day we came to the first village of the Arikaras, and on the following day to their great village, consisting of about a hundred earthen wigwams.[19] This tribe also received me very kindly. On the 6th of October we started from the Mandan village, for Fort Pierre, on the little Missouri;[20] a Canadian, whose destination lay in the same direction, accompanied us. The Commandant of the Fort had recommended to us in a special manner to be on our guard against the Jantonnois, the Santees, Jantous, Ankepatines, Ampapas, Ogallallas, and Black-feet Scioux, who have often proved very troublesome to white strangers.[21]

---

[18] For a sketch of the Mandan Indians, see Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 114, note 76; for an account of their burial customs, see p. 160, in the same volume; and for the location of their villages, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxiii, p. 234, note 192. The smallpox scourge occurred in 1837.

In reference to buffalo-boats or skin-boats, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxiii, p. 279, note 246.— Ed.

[19] For the original location of the Arikara villages, see our volume xxii, pp. 335, 336, notes 299, 300. At the time of the great small-pox scourge (1837), the Arikara were encamped near the Mandan village. The latter tribe abandoned their villages, and the small remnant moved some three miles up the Missouri, where they erected fifteen or twenty new huts; while the Arikara took possession of their old villages, where De Smet found them. For their location see our volume xxiii, pp. 254, 255. When the missionary in the succeeding sentence speaks of starting from the "Mandan village," he means the former Mandan village, now inhabited by the Arikara. The latter tribe remained at this site until their removal to Fort Berthold, about 1862.— Ed.

[20] In reference to Fort Pierre, see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 315, note 277. For a description of the Little Missouri River, more frequently known as Teton or Bad, see our volume xxiii, p. 94, note 81.— Ed.

[21] The reference is to the various divisions of the Dakota or Sioux; but the classification is unsatisfactory. For recent classification, see J. W. Powell, U. S. Bureau of Ethnology *Report*, 1885-86, pp. 111-113; also Maximilian's *Travels*,

On the third day of our journey we fell in with an ambuscade of the Jantonnois and Santees; they did not do us any harm, but on the contrary [24] treated us very kindly, and at our departure loaded us with provisions. The next day we fell in with several other parties, who showed us much kindness. On the ninth day we were on the lands of the Black-feet Scioux; this country is undulating and intersected with numberless little streams. For greater caution we travelled in ravines. Towards dinner time, a fine landscape, near a delicious spring, seemed to invite us to take some repose. We had scarcely alighted, when all on a sudden a tremendous yell alarmed us, and from the top of the hill under which we were, the Black-feet darted upon us like lightning. "Why do you hide yourselves?" asked the Chief, in a stern voice. "Are you afraid of us?" Dressed in my cassock with a crucifix on my breast,— a costume I always wear in the Indian country,— it appeared to me that I was the subject of his particular enquiry. He asked the Canadian what kind of a man I was. The Frenchman said I was a Chief, a Black-gown, the man who spoke to the Great Spirit. He assumed immediately a milder countenance, ordered his men to lay down their arms, and we performed the ceremonies of shaking hands and smoking the calumet of peace. He then invited me to accompany them to the village, situated only at a short distance. It consisted of about a thousand souls. I pitched my tent at some distance, in a beautiful pasture, on the margin of a fine stream, and invited the great chief to partake of a supper with me. As I said grace before meal, he enquired of the Canadian what I was about. He is addressing the Great Spirit, was

in our volume xxii, p. 326, note 287. By the "Jantonnais" and "Jantons," De Smet intends the modern Yanktonai and Yankton.— Ed.

the reply, in gratitude for the food he has granted us. The chief nodded a sign of approbation. Shortly after, twelve warriors, in full costume, stretched a large buffalo robe before the place where I sat. The chief, taking me by the arm, invited me to sit down. I was under the impression that there was [25] question again of smoking the calumet. Judge of my astonishment, when the twelve warriors, seizing each a piece of the robe, took me up, and headed by their chief, carried me in triumph to their village. In the lodge of the great chief the most conspicuous place was assigned me, and he addressed me thus: "This day is the happiest of my life. For the first time do we behold among us a man who is so closely united with the Great Spirit. Black-gown, you see before you the chief warriors of my tribe; I have invited them to this feast, in order that they may keep the remembrance of your coming among us as long as they shall live." Then he invited me to speak again to the Great Spirit, (to say grace), I began in the name of the Father and of the Son, etc., and immediately all present lifted up their hands towards heaven; when I had concluded they all struck the ground. I asked the chief what they meant by this ceremony. "When we lift up our hands," said he, "we signify that all our dependence is on the Great Spirit, and that he in his fatherly care provides for all our wants: we strike the ground to signify that we are only worms and miserable creeping beings in his sight." He asked me in his turn, what I had told to the Great Spirit. Unhappily, the Canadian was a poor interpreter, still I endeavored to make them understand, as well as I could, the Lord's Prayer. The chief showed great eagerness to know what I said.— He ordered his son and two other very intelligent young men to accompany me to the fort, in

order to learn the principles of the Christian doctrine, and to be at the same time a safeguard against the Indians who might be inimically disposed towards us. Two days afterwards we met an Indian, whose horse was bending under a load of buffalo meat. Seeing us without provisions, he requested us to accept what we might stand in need of, advising us to take [26] the whole, for, said he, in the vicinity of the fort, game is very scarce. Five days afterwards we arrived at Fort Pierre. Thence I travelled through prairies for nineteen days successively. We were often obliged to cook our victuals with dried herbs — not a stick was to be found. When I arrived at Fort Vermillion,[22] I was apprised that the Santees had been on a warlike expedition against the Pottawatomies, of the Council Bluffs, among whom I had labored the two preceding years.[23]

I invited them to a council, and gave them a severe reprimand for violating the solemn promise they had

---

[22] Vermillion Post, established for trading with the lower Sioux tribes, was located on the east bank of the Missouri, ten miles below the mouth of the Vermillion. The shifting of the stream has since 1881 rendered difficult the locating of the old post, which was described by Audubon, who passed there in 1843; see M. R. Audubon, *Audubon and his Journals* (New York, 1897), i, pp. 493, 494. Also consult *South Dakota Historical Collections*, i, pp. 376, 377. Dickson's post, also called Fort Vermillion, was some miles above the river of that name. See our volume xxiv, p. 97, note 73. It is uncertain which post is intended.— Ed.

[23] By the treaty made at Chicago in September, 1833, the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa ceded to the United States government about five million acres of land, whereupon the Potawatomi were assigned to a reservation between the western borders of the state of Missouri and the Missouri River, in what was later known as the Platte purchase. This tract was incorporated with Missouri in 1836, and the Indian tribe was transferred to a reservation in southwestern Iowa, with Council Bluffs as their chief village. Here in 1838 Father Verreydt, with Father de Smet and two lay brothers, laid the foundation of a mission dedicated to the "Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph," where De Smet served until his departure for the Flathead country (1840). Father Christian Hoecken succeeded him. By the treaty of 1846 the Potawatomi were transferred from Iowa to Kansas, where another Catholic mission was begun among them, frequently visited by De Smet in his later life.— Ed.

made me the preceding year, of living with their neighbors on amicable terms. I showed them the injustice of attacking a peaceable nation without being provoked; the dreadful consequences of the Pottawatomies' revenge, that might end in the extinction of their tribe. I was requested to be once more the mediator, and they told me that they had resolved to bury the tomahawk forever.[24]

I had lost two horses on the road; the one I was riding could hardly support me any longer, and I was yet three hundred miles distance from the Council Bluffs. I resolved of course to embark on the Missouri, and engaged a native Iroquois to be my pilot. At first we were favored with fine weather, but this lasted only a few days. Very soon inclement weather set in with frost and snow; and several times as we drifted down the rapid stream, our frail canoe was on the point of being dashed to pieces against the numberless snags that obstruct its navigation. This dangerous trip lasted ten days. We generally spent the night on a sand bar. We had only a few frozen potatoes left when we perceived a beautiful deer gazing at us, and apparently waiting to receive its mortal blow. We shot at it. [27] At last we arrived safe at the bluffs, and on the same night the river was closed by ice.

So many escapes from the midst of so many dangers thoroughly convinced me that this undertaking is the work of God — omnia disponens fortiter et ad finem suam conducens suaviter. (Who reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly.) I am now

[24] In 1839 Father de Smet undertook a journey from St. Joseph's mission, at Council Bluffs, into the Sioux territory for the purpose of effecting a treaty between these tribes and the Potawatomi. He ascended the Missouri in the steamer of the American Fur Company, on which J. N. Nicollet, the famous geographer, was likewise a passenger. See Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, i, pp. 179-192.— Ed.

preparing for my return, and will start early in Spring, accompanied by three Fathers and as many Brothers. You are aware such expeditions cannot be undertaken without the necessary means, and the fact is, I have no other reliance than Providence and the kindness of my friends. I hope they will not be wanting. I know that you must feel deeply interested in this meritorious good work, I therefore take the liberty of recommending it to your generosity, and that of your friends — every little contribution will help. I will be very grateful to you, if you have the kindness to forward to my address at the St. Louis University, Mo., before the end of March, or middle of April, the amount you have collected.

I recommend myself and my dear Neophytes to your good prayers and holy sacrifices, and rest assured that we shall not forget our benefactors.

P. J. De Smet, S. J.

LETTER II

TO THE REV. FATHER ROOTHAAN, GENERAL OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS[25]

University of St. Louis, 7th Feb. 1841.

Very Rev. Father:

In a letter, which I suppose has been communicated to you, I informed the Bishop of St. Louis of the results, as far as they bear on religion, of my journey to the *Rocky*

[25] Jean Philip von Roothan, born in Amsterdam (1785) of Catholic parents, entered a Jesuit novitiate in Russia (1804) and was educated at the college of Polotsk. He conducted a mission in Switzerland, and was the first superior of the province of Turin, when in 1829 he was elected twenty-first general of the order of Jesuits, an office in which he continued until his death in 1853. He was much interested in the over-seas missions, in 1833 issuing an encyclical on their behalf.— Ed.

Mountains. But that letter, though lengthy, could give you but a very imperfect idea of the desert which I passed six months in traversing, and of the tribes who make it the scene of their perpetual and sanguinary rivalship. It will, therefore, I think, be useful to resume the history of my mission; and I repeat it the more willingly, since I am called to penetrate again into those deep solitudes, from which, I may, perhaps, never return. To my brethren, who take an interest in my dear Indians, I owe an account of all my observations upon their character and customs, upon the aspect and resources of the country they inhabit, and upon their dispositions, that they may know how far they are favorable to the propagation of the Gospel.[26]

We arrived the 18th of May upon the banks of the *Nebraska*, or *Big Horn*, which is called by the French by the less suitable name of the *Flat River*.[27] It is one of the most magnificent rivers of North America. From its source, which is hidden among the remotest mountains of this vast continent, to the river Missouri, of which it is a tributary, it receives a number of torrents descending from the [29] Rocky Mountains; it refreshes and fertilizes immense vallies, and forms at its mouth the two great geographical divisions of the upper and lower Missouri. As we proceeded up this river, scenes more or

[26] The reader will note that this letter concerns itself with the same journey as that described in the previous epistle — the first visit to the Flatheads and return (1840). De Smet wrote several descriptions of this journey; that contained in his *Voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses* is more detailed than either presented herein. A translation of the latter is given in Chittenden and Richardson, who do not reprint this letter to Roothan.— Ed.

[27] For a brief description of Nebraska or Platte (flat or shallow) River, see our volume xiv, p. 219, note 170. It is the common belief that Nebraska is the aboriginal term for Platte, signifying "Shallow." De Smet's alternative, "Bighorn," is not found elsewhere. See also Nebraska Historical Society *Transactions*, i, p. 73.— Ed.

less picturesque opened upon our view. In the middle of the Nebraska, thousands of islands, under various aspects, presented nearly every form of lovely scenery. I have seen some of those isles, which, at a distance, might be taken for flotillas, mingling their full sails with verdant garlands, or festoons of flowers; and as the current flowed rapidly around them, they seemed, as it were, flying on the waters, thus completing the charming illusion, by this apparent motion. The tree which the soil of these islands produces in the greatest abundance, is a species of white poplar, called cotton tree; the savages cut it in winter, and make of the bark, which appears to have a good taste, food for their horses.

Along the banks of the river, vast plains extend, where we saw, from time to time, innumerable herds of wild Antelopes. Further on, we met with a quantity of buffaloes' skulls and bones, regularly arranged in a semicircular form, and painted in different colors. It was a monument raised by superstition, for the Pawnees never undertake an expedition against the savages who may be hostile to their tribe, or against the wild beasts of the forest, without commencing the chase, or war, by some religious ceremony, performed amidst these heaps of bones. At the sight of them our huntsmen raised a cry of joy; they well knew that the plain of the buffaloes was not far off, and they expressed by these shouts the anticipated pleasure of spreading havoc among the peaceful herds.

Wishing to obtain a commanding view of the hunt, I got up early in the morning and quitted the camp alone, in order to ascend a hillock near our tents, from which I might [30] fully view the widely extended pasturages. After crossing some ravines, I reached an eminence, whence I descried a plain, whose radius was about twelve

miles, entirely covered with wild oxen. You could not form, from any thing in your European markets, an idea of their movement and multitude. Just as I was beginning to view them, I heard shouts near me; it was our huntsmen, who rapidly rushed down upon the affrighted herd — the buffalos fell in great numbers beneath their weapons. When they were tired with killing them, each cut up his prey, put behind him his favorite part, and retired, leaving the rest for the voracity of the wolves, which are exceedingly numerous in these places, and they did not fail to enjoy the repast. On the following night I was awakened by a confused noise, which, in the fear of the moment, I mistook for impending danger. I imagined, in my first terror, that the Pawnees, conspiring to dispute with us the passage over their lands, had assembled around our camp, and that these lugubrious cries were their signal of attack.—"Where are we," said I, abruptly, to my guide. "Hark ye! — Rest easy," he replied, laying down again in his bed; "we have nothing to fear; it is the wolves that are howling with joy, after their long winter's hunger: they are making a great meal to-night on the carcasses of the buffalos, which our huntsmen have left after them on the plain."

On the 28th, we forded the southern arm of the river Platte.[28] All the land lying between this river and the great mountains is only a heath, almost universally covered with lava and other volcanic substances. This sterile country, says a modern traveller,[29] resembles, in nakedness

[28] For the route of the first portion of the Oregon trail, over which De Smet went out, see Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 49, note 30. There were several fording places for the South Platte, depending upon the state of the river. In subsequent pages, De Smet gives a vivid description of the difficulties and dangers of crossing this stream. See also Frémont's account in *Senate Docs.*, 28 Cong., 2 sess., ii.— Ed.

[29] See Washington Irving, *Astoria* (Philadelphia, 1841), chapter xxii.— Ed.

and the monotonous undulations of its soil, the sandy deserts of Asia. Here no permanent dwelling has ever been erected, and even the huntsman seldom appears in the best seasons of the year. At all other times the grass is withered, the [31] streams dried up; the buffalo, the stag, and the antelope, desert these dreary plains, and retire with the expiring verdure, leaving behind them a vast solitude completely uninhabited. Deep ravines formerly the beds of impetuous torrents, intersect it in every direction, but now-a-days the sight of them only adds to the painful thirst which tortures the traveller. Here and there are heaps of stones, piled confusedly like ruins; ridges of rock, which rise up before you like impassible barriers, and which interrupt, without embellishing, the wearisome sameness of these solitudes. Such are the Black Hills; beyond these rise the Rocky Mountains, the imposing land-marks of the Atlantic world. The passes and vallies of this vast chain of mountains afford an asylum to a great number of savage tribes, many of whom are only the miserable remnants of different people, who were formerly in the peaceable possession of the land, but are now driven back by war into almost inaccessible defiles, where spoliation can pursue them no further.

This desert of the West, such as I have just described it, seems to defy the industry of civilized man. Some lands, more advantageously situated upon the banks of rivers, might, perhaps, be successfully reduced to cultivation; others might be turned into pastures as fertile as those of the East — but it is to be feared that this immense region forms a limit between civilization and barbarism, and that bands of malefactors, organised like the Caravans of the Arabs, may here practise their depredations with impunity. This country will, perhaps,

one day, be the cradle of a new people, composed of the ancient savage races, and of that class of adventurers, fugitives and exiles, that society has cast forth from its bosom — a heterogeneous and dangerous population, which the American Union has collected like a [32] portentous cloud upon its frontiers, and whose force and irritation it is constantly increasing, by transporting entire tribes of Indians from the banks of the Mississippi, where they were born, into the solitudes of the West, which are assigned as their place of exile. These savages carry with them an implacable hatred towards the whites, for having, they say, unjustly driven them from their country, far from the tombs of their fathers, in order to take possession of their inheritance. Should some of these tribes hereafter form themselves into hordes, similar to the wandering people, partly shepherds, and partly warriors, who traverse with their flocks the plains of Upper Asia, is there not reason to fear, that in process of time, they with others, may organize themselves into bands of pillagers and assassins, having the fleet horses of the prairies to carry them; with the desert as the scene of their outrages, and inaccessible rocks to secure their lives and plunder?

On the 4th of June we crossed the Ramee, a tributary river of the Platte.[30] About forty tents erected on its banks, served as dwellings for a part of the tribe of the Sheyennes. These Indians are distinguishable for their civility, their cleanly and decent habits. The men, in general, are of good stature, and of great strength; their nose is aquiline, and their chin strongly developed. The

[30] Laramie River, one of the principal tributaries of the North Platte, rises in northern Colorado, flows north through Alba County, Wyoming, and breaking through the Laramie Mountains turns northeast into the Platte. The name is derived from a French Canadian trapper, Jacques Laramie, who about 1820 was killed upon its upper waters, by the Arapaho.— Ed.

neighboring nations consider them the most courageous warriors of the prairies. Their history is the same as that of all the savages who have been driven back into the West — they are only the shadow of the once powerful nation of the Shaways, who formerly lived upon the banks of the Red River. The Scioux, their irreconcilable enemies, forced them, after a dreadful war, to pass over the Missouri, and to retreat behind the Warrican, where they fortified themselves; but the conquerors again attacked them, and drove them from [33] post to post, into the midst of the Black Coasts, situate upon the waters of the Great Sheyenne River.[31] In consequence of these reverses, their tribe, reduced to two thousand souls, has lost even its name, being now called Sheyennes, from the name of the river that protects the remnant of the tribe. The Sheyennes have not since sought to form any fixed establishment, lest the Scioux should come again to dispute with them the lands which they might have chosen for their country. They live by hunting, and follow the buffalo in his various migrations.

The principal warriors of the nation invited me to a solemn banquet, in which three of the great chief's best

---

[31] This information as to the origin of the Cheyenne is derived from Lewis's *Statistical View* (London, 1807). See *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, vi, p. 100. It is now conceded that the Cheyenne, with their kindred tribe the Arapaho, probably once dwelt about the waters of the St. Croix River, in Wisconsin. Their tribal name (according to Lewis) was Sharha (Shaway), possibly a variant of the Sioux form Shaiela or Shaiena, whence their present name. Apparently they were driven northwestward from their Wisconsin habitat, and first settled upon Cheyenne River, North Dakota — a tributary of Red River of the North. It is conjectured that they were forced southwest by the Sioux. The Warreconne, where they made their final stand, is the present Big Beaver, in Emmons County, North Dakota. According to Cheyenne tradition, they were formerly an agricultural people, forced into nomadic habits by these various removals.

The term "Black Coasts" is an incorrect translation of "Côtes Noirs," Black Hills. See our volume xxiii, p. 244, note 204.— Ed.

dogs were served up to do me honor. I had half a one for my share. You may judge of my embarrassment, when I tell you that I attended one of those feasts at which every one is to eat all that is offered to him. Fortunately, one may call to his aid another guest, provided that the request to perform the kind office be accompanied by a present of tobacco.

In our way from Ramee, the sojourn of the Sheyennes, to the Green River, where the Flat Heads were waiting for me, we successively passed the Black Hills, which owe this name not to the color of the soil and rocks that form them, but to the sombre verdure of the cedars and pines that shadow their sides; the Red Bute,[32] a central point by which the savages are continually crossing, when emigrating to the West, or going up towards the North; and the famous rock, Independence, which is detached, like an outwork, from the immense chain of mountains that divide North America. It might be called the great registry of the desert, for on it may be read in large characters the names of the several travellers who have visited the Rocky Mountains. My name figures amongst so many others, as [34] that of the first priest who has visited these solitary regions.[33] These mountains have been designated the *back-bone* of the world. In fact a fitter appellation could not be given to these enormous masses of granite, whose summit is elevated nearly twenty-four thousand feet above the level of the sea; they are but rocks piled upon rocks. One might think that he beheld the ruins of a world covered, if I may so speak, with a winding-sheet of everlasting snow.

---

[32] For Red Buttes see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 183, including note 31.— Ed.

[33] For Independence Rock see Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 53, note 34.— Ed.

I shall here interrupt the recital of my journey, to give a short account of the different tribes of the mountains, and of the territory they inhabit. I will join with my own personal observations the most correct information that I could possibly obtain.

The Soshonees, or Root-diggers, appeared in great numbers at the common rendezvous, where the deputations from all the tribes assemble every year, to exchange the products of their rude industry. They inhabit the southern part of the Oregon, in the vicinity of California. Their population, consisting of about ten thousand souls, is divided into several parties, scattered up and down in the most uncultivated quarter of the West. They are called Snakes, because in their indigence they are reduced, like such reptiles, to burrow in the earth and live upon roots. They would have no other food if some hunting parties did not occasionally pass beyond the mountains in pursuit of the buffalo, while a part of the tribe proceeds along the banks of the Salmon River, to make provision for the winter, at the season when the fish come up from the sea.[34] Three hundred of their warriors wished, in honor of the whites, to go through a sort of military parade: they were hideously painted, armed with their clubs, and covered over with feathers, pearls, wolves' tails, the teeth and claws of animals and similar strange ornaments, with which each of them [35] had decked himself, according to his caprice. Such as had received wounds in battle, or slain the enemies of their tribe, showed ostentatiously their scars, and had floating, in the form of a standard, the scalps which they won from the conquered. After having rushed in good order, and at full gallop, upon our camp, as if to take it by

[34] For a sketch of this river see Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 69, note 45.— Ed.

assault, they went several times round it, uttering at intervals cries of joy. They at length dismounted, and came and gave their hands to all the whites in token of union and friendship.

Whilst I was at the rendezvous, the Snakes were preparing for an expedition against the Black-Feet. When a chief is about to wage war, he announces his intention to his young warriors in the following manner. On the evening before his departure, he makes his farewell dance before each cabin; and everywhere receives tobacco, or some other present. His friends wish him great success, scalps, horses, and a speedy return. If he brings back women as prisoners, he delivers them as a prey to the wives, mothers, and sisters of his soldiers, who kill them with the hatchet or knife, after having vented against their unhappy captives the most outrageous insults: "Why are we unable," howl these furies, "to devour the heart of thy children, and bathe in the blood of thy nation!"

At the death of a chief, or other warrior, renowned for his bravery, his wives, children, and relatives cut off their hair: this is a great mourning with the savages. The loss of a parent would seem but little felt, if it only caused his family to shed tears; it must be deplored with blood; and the deeper the incisions, the more sincere is the affection for the deceased. "An overwhelming sorrow," they say, "cannot be vented unless through large wounds." I know not how to reconcile these sentiments respecting the dead with their conduct towards the living. Would you believe [36] that these men, so inconsolable in their mourning, abandon, without pity, to the ferocious beasts of the desert, the old men, the sick, and all those whose existence would be a burden to them?

The funeral of a Snake warrior is always performed by the destruction of whatever he possessed; nothing, it seems, should survive him but the recollection of his exploits. After piling up in his hut all the articles he made use of, they cut away the props of the cabin, and set the whole on fire. The Youts, who form a separate people, although they belong to the tribe of the Soshonees,[35] throw the body of the deceased upon the funeral pile, together with a hecatomb of his best horses. The moment that the smoke rises in thick clouds, they think that the soul of the savage is flying towards the region of spirits, borne by the *manes* of his faithful coursers; and, in order to quicken their flight, they, all together, raise up frightful yells. But in general, instead of burning the body, they fasten it upon his favourite charger, as on a day of battle; the animal is then led to the edge of a neighboring river, the warriors are drawn up in a semicircular form, in order to prevent his escape; and then, with a shower of arrows, and a universal hurra, they force him to plunge into the current which is to engulf him. They next, with redoubled shouts, recommend him to transport his master without delay to the land of spirits.[36]

[37] The Sampeetches are the next neighbours of the

[35] The Ute belong, as De Smet says, to the Shoshonean stock, and originally occupied the country directly south of the habitat of the Snake Indians, or Shoshoni proper, which extended from the Rocky Mountains to California. The Ute were divided into numerous bands, differently classified by various authorities, and when first known to the whites numbered about four thousand souls. There are now over two thousand on two reservations — the Southern Ute in southwestern Colorado, and the other bands on the Unita reservation, in northeastern Utah.— Ed.

[36] Although this mode of funeral exists amongst the Snakes, it is not, however, common to all the Indian tribes. Amongst the people who live on the borders of lake Abbitibbi, in Lower Canada, as soon as a warrior happens to die, they wrap the body in a shroud, lower it into a grave about a foot and a half deep, and place alongside it a pot, a knife, a gun, and such other articles as are of prime

Snakes.[37] There is not, perhaps, in the whole world, a people in a [38] deeper state of wretchedness and corrup-

necessity to the savages. Some days after the burial, the relations of the deceased assemble to smoke over his grave. They then hang presents upon the nearest tree, particularly tobacco for the soul of the deceased, which is to come occasionally and smoke upon the grave, where the body is laid. They suppose that the poor soul is wandering not far from thence, until the body becomes putrified; after which it flies up to heaven. The body of a wicked man, they say, takes a longer time to corrupt than that of a good man; which prolongs his punishment. Such, in their opinion, is the only punishment of a bad life.

In Columbia we find that a different custom prevails. There, so soon as the person expires, his eyes are bound with a necklace of glass beads; his nostrils filled with aiqua (a shell used by the Indians in place of money), and he is clothed in his best suit and wrapped in a winding-sheet. Four posts, fixed in the ground, and joined by cross beams, support the ærial tomb of the savage: the tomb itself is a canoe, placed at a certain height from the ground, upon the beams I have just mentioned. The body is deposited therein, with the face downwards, and the head turned in the same direction as the course of the river. Some mats thrown upon the canoe finish the ceremony. Offerings, of which the value varies with the rank of the deceased, are next presented to him; and his gun, powder-horn and shot-bag are placed at his sides.

Articles of less value, such as a wooden bowl, a large pot, a hatchet, arrows, &c. are hung upon poles fixed around the canoe. Next comes the tribute of wailing, which husbands and wives owe to each other, and to their deceased parents, and also to their children: for a month, and often longer, they continually shed, night and day, tears, accompanied with cries and groans, that are heard at a great distance. If the canoe happen to fall down in course of time, the remains of the deceased are collected, covered again with a winding-sheet, and deposited in another canoe.— *Extract of a letter from M. Demers, Missionary among the Savages.*

Some individuals of other tribes, seen by Father de Smet on his tour, are the following: The Kootenays and the Carriers, with a population of 4,000 souls, the Savages of the Lake, who are computed at about 500, the Cauldrons 600, the Okinaganes 1,100, the Jantons and Santees 300, the Jantonnees 4,500, the Black-Feet Scioux 1,500, the Two-Cauldrons 800, the Ampapas 2,000, the Burned 2,500, the Lack-Bows 1,000, the Minikomjoos 2,000, the Ogallallees 1,500, the Saoynes 2,000, the Unkepatines 2,000, the Mandans, Big-Bellies, and Arikaras, who have formed of their remnants one tribe, 3,000, the Pierced-Noses, 2,500, the Kayuses 2,000, the Walla-Wallas 500, the Palooses 300, the Spokanes 800, the Pointed-Hearts 700, the Crows, the Assinboins, the Ottos, the Pawnees, the Santees, the Renards, the Aonays, the Kikapoux, the Delawares, and the Shawanons, whose numbers are unknown. The following are the names of the principal chiefs, who received the Missionary in their tents: The Big-Face and Walking-Bear, the Patriarchs of the Flat-Heads and Ponderas; the Iron-Crow, the Good-Heart, the Dog's-Hand, the Black-Eyes, the Man that does not eat cow's flesh, and the Warrior who walks barefooted; the last named is chief of the Black-Feet Scioux.— De Smet.

[37] "Sampeetch" was a term applied to a small band of Ute dwelling in central

tion; the French commonly designate them "*the people deserving of pity*," and this appellation is most appropriate.[38] Their lands are uncultivated heaths; their habitations are holes in the rocks, or the natural crevices of the ground, and their only arms, arrows and sharp-pointed sticks. Two, three, or at most four of them may be seen in company, roving over their sterile plains in quest of ants and grasshoppers, on which they feed. When they find some insipid root, or a few nauseous seeds, they make, as they imagine, a delicious repast. They are so timid, that it is difficult to get near them; the appearance of a stranger alarms them; and conventional signs quickly spread the news amongst them. Every one, thereupon, hides himself in a hole; and in an instant this miserable people disappear and vanish like a shadow. Sometimes, however, they venture out of their hiding places, and offer their newly born infants to the whites in exchange for some trifling articles.

I have had the consolation of baptizing some of these unfortunate beings, who have related to me the sad circumstances which I have just mentioned. It would be easy to find guides among these new converts, and be introduced [39] by them to their fellow countrymen, to announce to them the Gospel, and thus to render their condition, if not happy, at least supportable through the hope of a better futurity. If God allows me to return to the Rocky Mountains, and my superiors approve of it,

---

Utah along the river now known as San Pitch, with a valley and mountain ranges of the same designation. The name was frequently used in descriptions of Ute bands until about 1870, when these Indians, reduced in number to less than two hundred, were segregated upon the Unita reservation and lost their distinctive appellation.— Ed.

[38] In *Voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses*, containing the French original of this letter, Father de Smet classes the Paiute and Yampah Ute with the Sampeetches as the tribes called by the French *les Dignes de pitié*.— Ed.

I shall feel happy to devote myself to the instruction of these *pitiable people.*

The country of the Utaws is situated to the east and south east of the Soshonees, at the sources of the Rio Colorado. The population consists of about 4,000 souls. Mildness, affability, simplicity of manners, hospitality towards strangers, constant union amongst themselves, form the happy traits in their character. They subsist by hunting and fishing, and on fruits and roots; the climate is warm, and the land very fit for cultivation.

I shall join to this account a brief exposition of the belief of the savages.[39] Their religious tenets are composed of a few primitive truths and of gross errors: they believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, the source of every good, and consequently that he alone is adorable; they believe that he created whatever exists, and that his providence over-rules the principal events of life, and that the calamities which befall the human race are chastisements inflicted by his justice on our perversity. They suppose, that with this, their God, whom they call the *Great Spirit*, there exists an evil genius, who so far abuses his power as to oppress the innocent with calamities. They also believe in a future life, where every one shall be treated according to his works; that the happiness reserved for the virtuous will consist in the enjoyment of such goods as they most anxiously desired upon earth; and that the wicked shall be punished by suffering, without consolation, the torments invented by the spirit of evil. According to their opinion, [40] the soul, upon its entry into the other world, resumes the form which our bodies have had in the present life.[40]

[39] The following account of the religious beliefs relates to the mountain tribes with whom De Smet was most familiar, chiefly those of the Salishan stock.— Ed.

[40] A Canadian Missionary, who lived for a long time among the savages, gives

[41] What I am going to add applies chiefly to the tribe that I have been lately instructing. Besides my escort of Flat Heads, I had also with me an intrepid Fleming, John Baptist de Velder, who formerly served as a grenadier under Napoleon. From the battle fields of Europe he betook himself to the forests of the New World, where he has passed thirty years of his life in pursuit of beavers

---

the following account of the popular tradition of the Indians respecting the creation of the world:—"Water, they say, was every where formerly; and Wiskain, a spirit, or subordinate deity, commanded the castor to dive into it, in order to procure some earth. The castor obeyed the order, but he was so fat that he could not possibly descend to the bottom, and he had to return without any earth. Wiskain, nothing discouraged, charged the musk-rat with the commission which the castor was unable to perform. The new messenger having remained a long while under water, and with as little success as the castor, returned almost drowned. The rat expected that he should not be required a second time, as he had already nearly lost his life. But Wiskain, who was not discouraged by obstacles, directed the rat to dive again, promising him, that if he should happen to be drowned, he (Wiskain) would restore him to life. The rat dived a second time, and made the greatest efforts to comply with Wiskain's orders. After remaining a considerable while under the water, he arose to the surface, but so exhausted by fatigue that he was insensible. Wiskain, upon a careful and minute examination, finds at length in the claws of the poor animal a little earth, upon which he breathes with such effect, that it begins to augment rapidly. When he had thus blown for a long time, feeling anxious to know if the earth was large enough, he ordered the crow, which at that period was as white as the swan, to fly round it, and take its dimensions. The crow did accordingly, and returned, saying that the work was too small. Wiskain set about blowing upon the earth with renewed ardour, and directed the crow to make a second tour round it, cautioning him, at the same time, not to feed upon any carcass that he might see on the way. The crow set off again without complaint, and found, at the place which had been pointed out, the carcass which he was forbidden to touch. But, having grown hungry on the way, and being also, perhaps, excited by gluttony, he filled himself with the infected meat, and on his return to Wiskain, informed him that the earth was large enough, and that he need not, therefore, resume his work. But the unfaithful messenger, at his return, found himself as black as he had been white at his setting out, and was thus punished for his disobedience, and the black colour communicated to his descendants." The above tradition, which bears some striking vestiges of the tradition respecting original sin, and several circumstances of the deluge, makes no mention whatever of the creation of man and woman; and, however illogical it may be, it is, perhaps, not more ridiculous than the systems of certain pretended philosophers of the last century, who, in hatred of revelation, have endeavoured to explain the formation of the earth, by substituting their extravagant reveries for the Mosaic account.— De Smet.

and bears. During the Missionary's journey, he was his devoted friend, and the faithful companion of his dangers. He has now taken the resolution to traverse the desert only as a guide to the apostles of the Gospel. He had almost forgotten his native language, except his prayers, and a hymn in honour of Mary, which his mother taught him when a child, and which he daily recited, when engaged in the adventurous chase.

I found the Flat Heads and the Ponderas assembled, to the number of sixteen hundred, in the beautiful Peters' Valley. You know already the reception they gave me, and I shall never forget it. The enthusiastic joy with which they welcomed my arrival — the exulting shouts of the young warriors — the tears of the aged, returning thanks to the Great Spirit, for having granted them the favour to see and hear a Black-Gown before their death — that scene, I repeat it, I can never forget. I shall not recount the religious exercises of my mission, as the consoling results of them have been already communicated to you. You will, [42] perhaps, take an interest in reading the notes I have collected regarding the character and habits of my neophytes, during a sojourn of three months amongst them; living like them, by the chase and on roots, having only a buffalo's hide for my bed, passing my nights under the canopy of heaven, when the weather was calm, or taking shelter under a small tent against the fury of the tempest.

With regard to the character of these Indians, it is entirely pacific. They never fight, except in circumstances of lawful defence; but they are, unfortunately, often reduced to this said necessity, in consequence of the warlike temper of the Black Feet tribe, who are their neighbours and implacable enemies. That marauding people appear to live only for murder and pillage.[41] They are the terror

[41] For Pierre's Hole (Peter's Valley) see Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi,

of the savages of the west, who endeavour, as much as possible, to avoid their fatal encounter. But should the Flat Heads, notwithstanding such precaution, be forced to fight, their courage is as conspicuous as their love of peace; for they rush impetuously on their adversaries, whom they prevent from escaping, and generally make them pay dear for their cruel attacks.

It is a truth which has become proverbial in the mountains, that one Flat Head, or one of the Ear Rings, is worth four Black Feet. If the band of the latter meets a detachment of Flat Heads, of equal or superior numbers, they forthwith appear disposed for peace, unfurl a standard, and present a pipe, in token of friendship. The Flat Heads always accept these tokens of amity; but they take care to make their enemies sensible that the motives which influence their conduct on such occasions are fully understood. "Black Foot," they say, "I take your pipe, but be assured that I am aware that your heart is disposed for war, and that your hands are stained with murder. Let us smoke [43] together, as you desire it, though I am convinced that blood will soon be made to flow."

The greatest reproach that could be made to the Flat Heads was their excessive love for games of chance, in which they often risked all they possessed. The Indians of Colombia carried this passion to an almost inconceivable degree; for, after losing their goods, they would stake their own persons, at first playing for one hand, then for the other; and if the game continued unfavorable to them, they played successively for every one of their limbs, and, lastly, for their head, which, if they lost, they, together with their wives and children, became slaves for life.

---

p. 63, note 41. Concerning the hostile and implacable character of the Blackfeet tribes consult Bradbury's *Travels*, in our volume v, p. 220, note 120; also Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxiii, pp. 90-92.— Ed.

The government of the nation is confided to chiefs, who have merited this title by their experience and exploits, and who possess more or less influence, according to the degree of wisdom and courage they have displayed in council or battle. The chief does not command, but seeks to persuade; no tribute is paid to him, but, on the contrary, it is one of the appendages of his dignity to contribute more than any other to the public expense. He is generally one of the poorest in the village, in consequence of giving away his goods for the relief of his indigent brethren, or for the general interests of his tribe. Although his power has nothing imperious in it, his authority is not the less absolute; and it may, without exaggeration, be asserted, that his wishes are complied with as soon as known. Should any mutinous individual be deaf to his personal command, the public voice would soon call him to account for his obstinacy. I know not of any government where so much personal liberty is united with greater subordination and devotedness.

All the mountain tribes differ somewhat from each other in their dress. The men wear a long robe, made of the [44] skins of the antelope or sheep, with shoes and gaiters of doe or dog's skin, and a buffalo hide cloak, covered with woollen cloth, painted in various colours. The Indian loves to add ornament to ornament: his long hair is decked with various kinds of feathers, and a great number of ribbands, rings, and shells. In order to give suppleness to his limbs, he rubs his body with bear's grease, over which he spreads a thick layer of vermillion. Children under seven years of age are scarcely ever clothed, except in winter; they are afterwards dressed in a sort of tunic, made of skins, which is open under the arms. They spend whole days amusing themselves in the water, and sometimes even in the mire. The women wear a large pelerine, adorned

with elks' teeth and several rows of pearls. Amongst the Arikaras, their grand dress consists of a fine chemise, with doe-skin shoes and gaiters, embroidered in brilliant colours. A quiver filled with arrows is suspended from the left shoulder; and a cap of eagles' feathers adorns the brow of warriors and huntsmen. He that has killed an enemy on his own land is distinguished by having the tails of wolves tied on his legs; the bear-killer wears, for a trophy, the claws of that animal as a necklace; the privilege of a savage who has taken in battle one or more scalps, is to have a red hand painted on his mouth, to show that he has drunk the blood of his enemies. The Indian is not less proud of his horse, the companion of all his excursions and of all his dangers, and the friend to which he becomes extremely attached. The head, breast, and the flanks of the noble animal are covered with scarlet cloth, adorned with pearls and fringes, to which are attached a multitude of little round bells. Cleanliness is a quality not possessed by the savage, nor are the women more particular in this respect than the men; for they never wash their pots or saucepans; and at [45] their meals they often make use of their straw hats, which have no leaf, instead of bowls.[42]

As I before mentioned, the only prevailing vice that I found amongst the Flat Heads was a passion for games of chance — it has since been unanimously abolished. On the other hand, they are scrupulously honest in buying and selling. They have never been accused of stealing. Whenever any lost article is found, it is immediately given to the chief, who informs the tribe of the fact, and restores it to the lawful owner. Detraction is a vice unknown even amongst the women; and falsehood is particularly odious

[42] For a description of these hats, woven chiefly by the Pacific coast Indians, and an article of traffic with the interior, see *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, iii, pp. 294, 296, 359-361.— Ed.

to them. A forked-tongued (a liar) they say, is the scourge of a people. Quarrels and violent anger are severely punished. Whenever any one happens to fall into trouble, his neighbors hasten to his aid. The gaiety of their disposition adds a charm to their union. Even the stranger is received as a friend; every tent is open to him, and that which he prefers is considered the most honored. In the Rocky Mountains they know not the use of locks or bolts.[43]

In looking at this picture, which is in nowise overdrawn, you will perhaps ask, are these the people whom civilized men call barbarians? We have been too long erroneously accustomed to judge of all the savages by the Indians on the frontiers, who have learned the vices of the whites. And even with respect to the latter, instead of treating them with disdain, it would perhaps be more just not to reproach them with a degradation, of which the example has been given them, and which has been promoted by selfish and deplorable cupidity.

The country inhabited by the Flat Heads is as picturesque as their lives are innocent. We often met in the neighborhood of the several encampments of the tribe, majestic torrents, forests with trees that have been growing for ages, [46] and pastures covered with the *traveller's tea*, which, although trampled by numberless horses, embalms the air with its delightful fragrance.[44] We continually beheld a grand succession of lofty mountains; some delighted the sight by their blooming verdure and the imposing appearance of the woods that crowned their summits, while others, as red as brick, bore the impressions of some great convulsion of nature. At the base of the latter may be

---

[43] Compare with this the description of the Flatheads given in 1814 by Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River* (New York, 1832), pp. 121-127.— Ed.

[44] Probably our author here refers to the sage-brush of the Western plains, *Artemisia tridentata*.— Ed.

seen piled up layers of lava, and at their tops the ancient craters are easily distinguished. One day, as the tribe was proceeding towards the banks of the lake Henry,[45] I felt a desire to ascend to the top of a mountain, situate between the waters of the Colombia and the Missouri, in the hope of discovering the exact place where those two great rivers rise, and the distance between them. I succeeded in finding one of their sources: they form two torrents, which, being divided where they rise, by the distance of scarce a hundred paces, continually diverge as they descend towards the plain.[46] Their course over the rocks presents an enchanting sight: they do not flow along, but roll from cascade to cascade; and nothing is comparable to the beauty of their bounding waters, except the distant noise of their fall, repeated by the echoes of the solitary mountains.

Finding it impossible to get to the highest top of the mountain that overlooks these sources, I stopped when I had reached an elevation of 5,000 feet.[47] I then cast my eyes upon the immense region that lay extended at my feet; I contemplated to myself all the tribes upon the banks of the Missouri, as far as Council Bluffs: I thought on my dear colleagues, who are sent by Providence, like angels of salvation, amongst these savages hordes; and I considered, with mixed feelings of joy and grief, their labors, consolations, and hopes, and how disproportionate

[45] De Smet had accompanied the Indians in their journey from Pierre's Hole westward and then northward along the Teton River to its junction with the Henry; thence they proceeded up that stream to its source in Henry Lake, the northeastern corner of Idaho. As the source of a chief fork of the Snake, this is one of the mountain origins of the Columbia. It was named for Andrew Henry, an adventurous trader, for whom see our volume xv, p. 246, note 107.— Ed.

[46] Probably the stream that runs into Red Rock Lake, in southwestern Montana, the source of Jefferson River, the main branch of the Missouri.— Ed.

[47] This was the main chain of the Rockies, on the boundary between Idaho and Montana, just above the present Reynolds Pass.— Ed.

is their number [47] to the people requiring the aid of their ministry. Kind people, what futurity awaits thee? Holy Missioners, what recompense is reserved for your self-devotion? I remembered that they and I have in heaven a powerful intercessor, in the illustrious founder of our Society; and in order to interest him in our dear missions, from the summit of that mountain from which I could nearly view them all, I placed them under his protection. I would fain persuade myself that he will not prove forgetful of his followers, who are endeavoring to plant the Gospel in these countries where it has hitherto been unknown. Additional apostolic teachers will come hither to assist us by their zeal, before the vices of civilization and the proselytism of error have multiplied the obstacles to the propagation of that faith which all the savages so anxiously desire to know, and which, like the Flat Heads and the Ponderas, they would practise with gratitude and fidelity.

The 27th of August was the day I fixed upon for my departure.[48] Seventeen warriors, chosen from amongst the bravest of the two nations, and under the command of three chiefs, arrived early in the morning, before the entrance of my cabin.[49] The council of the ancients

[48] In this letter, Father de Smet does not describe his movements with the Flatheads, who having crossed to Red Rock Lake advanced slowly down the Jefferson until August 21, where they camped at the Three Forks of Missouri, and prepared to lay in their winter's supply of buffalo meat. There he left them for his return to St. Louis.— Ed.

[49] As a beautiful specimen of an affecting farewell address, we take from the journal of a Canadian Missionary the following discourse spoken by one of the savages of the Red River, to the Black-Gown who had converted them, when he was about leaving them. After expressing, in the name of all the Indians of his locality, the grief which they felt at the Missionary's departure, he added the following words, which prove their gratitude to the worthy Priest, who had brought to them the truths of salvation, and to the members of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, whose charity had procured them so great a benefit:—

"Dear Father, you are going to leave us, but we hope to see you again. We

appointed them to [48] serve as my escort while I should be in the country of the Black Feet and of the Crows.[50] Of these two tribes, so hostile to the whites, the former never gives them quarter, and the latter will sometimes spare their lives only to leave them, after having robbed them of every thing, to die of hunger in the desert. As we were liable, every instant, to fall into some ambush, we had scouts sent in all directions to reconnoitre the place and examine the defiles; and the smallest trace of a man having passed before us, was minutely examined. And here we cannot sufficiently admire the wonderful sagacity with which Providence has endowed the savage: he will tell you, from the mere footmarks, the exact day on which the Indian had erected his tent on the spot, and how many men and horses had been there; whether it was a detachment of warriors or a company of hunters, and the nation to which they belong. We selected, every evening, a favorable site for our camp, and raised around it a little fort with the trunks of dry trees, in order to protect ourselves against any surprise during the night.

---

are quite sensible that you naturally wish to see your relations and friends, your towns and country — we shall find the time of your absence very long, but the winter is soon over.— We conceived it to be our duty to assemble before your departure, and to express our feelings. We shall only say these few words: we formerly led very wicked lives, and we know this day to what destruction we were hastening. There was a thick cloud before our eyes; you have dispersed it; we see the sun. We shall never forget what you have done and suffered for us.— Go now, go and tell the Prayers, those kind Prayers, who take pity on us; who love us without knowing us; and who send us priests; go and tell them that savages know how to remember a benefit; go and tell them that we also pray for them, in the desire which we feel to know them, one day, in the abode of our common Father. Set out, but return and instruct those whom you have baptized: leave us not forever in affliction; depart, and in the meanwhile remember that we are counting the days."— DE SMET.

[50] De Smet thus describes his route: "For two days we were going up the Gallatin, the southern fork of the Missouri; thence we crossed by a narrow pass (Bozeman's) thirty miles in length to the Yellowstone river, the second of the great tributaries of the Missouri."— Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, i, p. 234.— ED.

[49] This region is the retreat of grizzly bears, the most terrible animals of the desert, whose strength equals their daring and voracity. I have been assured that by a single stroke of his paw, one of these animals tore away four ribs of a buffalo, which fell dead at his feet. He seldom attacks man, unless when he has been surprised and wounded.—An Indian, however, belonging to my escort, in passing by a thick wood of sallow trees, was assailed by one of these ferocious beasts, that sprung furiously upon his horse, fixed his formidable claws in his back, and brought him to the ground. The horseman fortunately was not mounted at the time, and having his gun in his hand, the bear instantly disappeared in the depths of the forest.

On the 5th of September we crossed a defile, which had been passed shortly before by a numerous troop of horsemen. Whether they were allies or enemies, we had no means to discover. I will here observe, that in these immense solitudes, although the howling of wolves, the hissing of venomous serpents, the roaring of the tiger and the bear be calculated to affright, yet this terror is nothing in comparison with the dread excited in the traveller's soul, upon seeing the fresh tracks of men and horses, or columns of smoke rising in the neighborhood. At such a sight, the escort at once assembles and deliberates; each one examines his fire-arms, sharpens his knife and the point of his arrow, and makes, in a word, every preparation for a resistance, even to death; for, to surrender, in such circumstances, would be to expose one's-self to perish in the most frightful torments. The path that we were following led us to a heap of stones, piled upon a small eminence; they were stained with blood, lately spilt; my escort examined them with a mournful attention. The principal chief, a man possessed of much sense, said to me, in a solemn [50] tone, "Father, I think I ought to give you an explanation

of what we are looking at. The Crows are not far off: in two hours we shall see them. If I be not mistaken, we are upon one of their fields of battle; and here their nation must have met with some great loss. This monument has been erected to the memory of the warriors, who fell beneath the blows of their enemies. Here the mothers, wives and daughters of them that died, have been weeping over their tombs. It is customary for the women to tear their faces, to make deep cuts in their legs and arms, and to water these tumulary piles with streams of blood. Had we arrived sooner, we should have heard their cries and funeral lamentations." He was not mistaken, as we immediately perceived a considerable troop of savages at a league's distance. They were the Crows, who were returning to their camp, after having paid the tribute of blood to forty of their warriors, who were massacred two years before by the tribe of the Black Feet. Being at present the allies of the Flat Heads, they received us with transports of joy. There were groups of women with them, and so disfigured as to excite both pity and horror. This scene of grief is renewed every year, when they pass near the tombs of their relations.[51]

The chiefs of the Crows wished to cement, by a great feast, their alliance with the tribe of our neophytes. As the language of the two nations is very different, the conversation was made by signs.[52] I shall endeavor to describe this dumb language, by mentioning to you how a bargain, at which I was present, was concluded. A young Crow, of gigantic size, and clad in his best garments, advanced into the midst of the assembly, leading his horse

---

[51] On the mourning habits of the Western Indians, see our volume xxiii, p. 362, note 331.— Ed.

[52] For references on the Indian sign language see our volume xix, p. 221, note 56 (Gregg); also our volume xxiv, pp. 300-312.— Ed.

by the bridle, and placed him before the Flat Head, with whose horse he offered to make an exchange. The Flat Head took no notice of him, and kept in an immovable attitude. The [51] Crow then placed, successively, at the feet of the seller, his gun, his scarlet mantle, his ornaments, his gaiters, and, lastly, his shoes. The Flat Head then took the horse by the bridle, picked up the clothes, &c., and the sale was concluded without saying a word. The Crow, though so divested, joyfully mounted his new courser, and rode several times round the camp, shouting in triumph, and putting his horse through all his paces.

The principal wealth of the savages of the west consists in horses, of which each chief and warrior possesses a great number, that may be seen grazing about their camp. The horses of the Crows are principally of the Maroon race of the prairies.[53] They have also many horses which they have stolen from the Scioux, the Sheyennes, and other Indians of the south-west, which they had in their turn stolen from the Spaniards of Mexico. The Crows are considered the most indefatigable marauders of the desert; they traverse the mountains in all directions, bringing to one side what they have taken at the other. The name of Atsharoke, or Crow, has been given to them on account of

---

[53] In prehistoric times, the horse was indigenous in America. Evidence thereof was collected by Professor O. C. Marsh, and has recently been corroborated by the results of the Whitney Exploring Expedition; see H. F. Osborn, "Evolution of the Horse in America," in *Century Magazine*, lxix, pp. 3-17. Why this animal became extinct on the western continent is unknown; but it seems certain that the Spanish discoverers found no trace thereof among theAmerican Indians, and that the horses of the plains Indians were derived from those lost or abandoned by or stolen from the Spanish conquerors of Mexico. These soon reverted to a wild state and became what De Smet calls "the Maroon race of the prairies." Upon the changes in the economy of life among American aborigines, brought about by their possession of the horse, consult A. F. Bandelier, "Investigations in the Southwest," in Archæological Institute of America *Papers*, American Series, iii, p. 211.— Ed.

their robberies.[54] They are practised from their infancy in this sort of larceny, and they acquire a surprising dexterity in it; their glory augments with the number of their captures, so that a finished robber is in their eyes a hero. I accompanied for two days, these savages, who, I think, were the finest Indians I had met in all my travels. They passed the whole time in rejoicings and feasting. You will not be scandalized, I trust, when I tell you that I was present at twenty different banquets. I was scarcely seated in one cabin, when I was called to partake of the festive entertainment in another.

We arrived, at last, at the first fort belonging to the Fur Company. The Americans, who have here a trading post, received us most cordially. At this place I was to part with [52] my faithful Flat Heads. I therefore told them, that, having before me a country still more exposed to the incursions of the Black Feet, the Assiniboins, the Big Bellies, the Arikaras, and Scioux, all of whom are declared enemies of their tribe, I would no longer peril their lives, on account of my personal safety; that as for my life, I placed it in the hands of God, and that I felt a persuasion it would be preserved, in order that, accompanied by new Missionaries, I might immediately return to them. I exhorted them for the last time to remain faithful to the Great Spirit. We embraced each other, wishing, mutually, a happy return; and shortly after, accompanied by my faithful Fleming, I disappeared from their sight amidst the solitary defiles. We were to pass over several hundred miles of country, where no road is yet traced, and, like the navigator on the boundless ocean, with no other guide than the compass.

---

[54] Absaroka (Upsahroku) is the name by which the Crows know themselves, although according to Lewis and Clark it designated but one band of the tribe. Its significance is uncertain, although usually thought to be a certain species of hawk. The name "Crow"— literally raven, but translated "Corbeaux" by the

For a long time we followed the course of the Yellow Stone, except when perpendicular rocks arrested our progress and obliged us to take a circuit. In many places we discovered forts which the savages are in the habit of raising for defence, or for concealing themselves, when they are at war, or waiting for their prey. Perhaps, at the moment of our passing, they were not without enemies. What a solitude, with its horrors and dangers! but it possesses one real advantage: with death constantly before our eyes, we irresistibly feel, without the possibility of illusion, that we are entirely in the hands of God, without any support but Him, without any other refuge than his paternal providence; it is then easy to make to Him the sacrifice of a life which belongs less to us than to the first savage who wishes to take it, and to form the most generous resolutions of which man is capable. It was really the best spiritual retreat that I made in my life.

The second day of the journey, on awaking, I perceived, at the distance of a quarter of a mile, the smoke of a great [53] fire — a point of a rock was all that separated us from a detachment of Indians. Without a moment's delay we saddled our horses and set off, galloping with all speed along the ravines and beds of dried up torrents. We rode that day, without resting, more than fifteen leagues, and we did not encamp until two hours after sunset, lest the savages, having observed our track, should think of pursuing us.— The same fear prevented us from lighting a fire, which obliged us to dispense with supper. I wrapped myself in my blanket, stretched myself on the grass beside my companion, and having recommended myself to God, I endeavored to beguile hunger by sleep.

French — is an Anglicized form of the name given to this tribe by the surrounding Indians, and may refer to their pilfering tendencies. See our volume v, p. 226, note 121.— Ed.

My grenadier, more courageous than I, soon snored like a steam engine in full play.

The next morning we were on our way at day-break; we advanced with caution, for the country appeared full of danger. Towards mid-day we met a new subject of alarm — we found a buffalo, which had been killed about two hours previously. We thrilled at the sight, when we thought that the enemy was not far off; and yet we had reason to thank the Lord for having prepared the food for our evening meal. The following night we encamped among rocks, which are the retreat of tigers and bears. I have already said that the dens of the wild beasts inspire incomparably less terror to the traveller than the hut of the savage. I this time slept heavily and well. We always commenced our journey early in the morning, and each day had new dangers to face, and to meet occasionally the fresh traces of men and horses. One day we had to cross a field of tents, which had been recently abandoned; the fires were not quite extinguished; but happily we met no one. At length we saw again the Missouri at the very place, where an hour before, a hundred families of the Assiniboins had passed over it. The foregoing is only a sketch of the [54] long and perilous journey which we made from the fort of the Crows to fort Union, situated at the mouth of the Yellow Stone river.[55]

All the country watered by this river abounds in game; I do not think that there is in all America another place better suited for hunting: we were continually amidst vast herds of buffalos; we frequently discovered groups of majestic elks bounding over the plains, whilst clouds, if I may say so, of antelopes were flying before us with the swiftness of the wind. The Ashata, or Big Horn, alone

[55] For a sketch of this fort see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, p. 373, note 349.— Ed.

appeared not to be disturbed at our presence: we saw them in groups, reposing on the edges of the precipices, or sporting on the points of the steep rocks. The black-tailed roebuck, so richly dressed in its brown coat, frequently excited our admiration, by its elegant shape, and abrupt, animated movements, in which it appears scarcely to touch the earth with its feet.[56] I have already spoken of the grizzly bears, which are here to be met with in abundance, as well as the wolves, panthers, badgers and wild cats. Often the traveller sees the prairie hen and the cock of the mountain start up from the midst of the heath. The lakes and rivers are covered with swans, geese and ducks: the industrious beaver, the otter, and the muskrat, together with the fishes, are in peaceable possession of their solitary waters.

The Arikaras and the Big Bellies, who had been described to us as most dangerous, received us as friends, whenever we met them on our way. Before setting out for war, they observe a strict fast, or rather they abstain from all food for four days. During this interval their imagination is excited to madness; and, either from the effect of weakness, or the warlike projects which fill their minds, they pretend that they have extraordinary visions. The elders and sages of the tribe are called upon to interpret these reveries; [55] and they pronounce them to be more or less favorable to the undertaking. Their explanations are received as oracles, according to which the expedition is scrupulously regulated. Whilst the preparatory fast endures, the warriors make incisions in their bodies, and bury in the flesh, under the shoulder-blade, pieces of wood, to which they attach leather thongs, by which they are suspended from a stake, fixed horizontally over the brink of

[56] For these two animals, the latter of which is commonly known as the black-tailed or mule deer, see our volume xix, p. 327, note 137 (Gregg).— Ed.

a chasm a hundred and fifty feet deep. They even sometimes cut off one or two fingers, which they offer as a sacrifice to the Great Spirit, in order that they may return loaded with scalps.[57]

In a recent expedition against the Scioux, the Arikaras killed twenty warriors of the hostile tribe, and piled up the corpses in the middle of their village. The solemn dance of victory then commenced, at which men, women, the aged, and children assisted. After having celebrated, at length, the exploits of the brave, they rushed, like wild beasts, upon the mangled and bloody bodies of the Scioux, parcelled them amongst themselves, and fixed the hideous trophies to the end of long poles, which they carried in proud triumph around the village.

It is impossible to form an idea of the cruelty that presides over the barbarous revenge of those tribes, who are constantly occupied in mutual destruction. As soon as the savages learn that the warriors of a rival nation have set out for the chase, they unexpectedly attack the enemy's defenceless camp, and massacre the women, old men, and children in the cradle. Wo to the men who are spared; their agony is deferred in order to render it more terrible. At other times they lie in wait in their enemy's path, and allow the detachment to pass on, until they have in their power such a portion of it as must infallibly become their [56] prey; whereupon they raise the death cry, and pour upon the enemy a shower of balls, arrows, and pieces of rock; this movement is the signal of extermination: the battle becomes a massacre: the sights of horror which would freeze the heart of any civilized man, serve only to inflame the fury of the savage: he outrages his prostrate rival, tramples on his mangled carcass, tears off his hair,

[57] On these ceremonies, see our volume xxiii, p. 324, note 292, and p. 378, note 350.— Ed.

wallows in his blood with the delight of a tiger, and often devours the quivering limbs of the fallen, while they have scarcely ceased to exist.

Such of the vanquished as have not fallen in the combat are reserved to adorn the triumph, and are conducted prisoners to the village of the conquerors. The women come to meet the returning warriors, amongst whom they seek with anxious looks their husbands and brothers: if they discover them not, they express their grief by terrific howling. One of the warriors soon commands silence; he then gives the details of the fortunate expedition; describes the place selected for the ambuscade, the consternation of the waylaid tribe, the bravery of the assailants, and recounts the number of the dead and of the captives. To this recital, which is made with all the intoxication of victory, succeeds the calling over the names of the warriors: their absence tells they are no more. The piercing cries of the women are then renewed; and their despair presents a scene of frenzy and grief, which exceeds all imagination. The last ceremony is the proclaiming of victory. Every one instantly forgets his own misfortunes; the glory of the nation becomes the happiness of all; by an inconceivable transition, they pass in a moment from frantic grief to the most extravagant joy.

I know not what terms to use in order to describe the torments which they inflict on the wretched prisoners: one [57] plucks off their nails, another tears away their flesh; red hot irons are applied to every part of their bodies; they are flayed alive, and their palpitating flesh is devoured as food.[58] The women, who, in other nations, are more accessible to the feelings of pity than the men, here shew themselves more thirsty for revenge, and more ingenious in the barbarous refinement of cruelty. Whilst this horrible

[58] On the subject of cannibalism see our volume xxiii, p. 278, note 242.— Ed.

drama goes on, the chiefs are gravely seated about the stake at which the victim is writhing. The latter appears to be only intent on conquering his anguish: often has the prisoner been seen to brave his executioners, and with a stoic coolness exclaim, "I fear not death; those who are afraid of your torments are cowards; a woman of my tribe would despise them. Shame upon my enemies; they have not even the power to force from me a tear. In order to take me, they supplied their weakness by strategy; and now, to revenge themselves, they have assembled an entire people against one man, and they are unable to triumph over him — the cowards! Oh, if they were in my place, how I would devour them, how I would sip from their accursed skulls the last drop of their blood!"

The great village of the Arikaras is only ten miles distant from that of the Mandans. I was surprised to see around their habitations large and well cultivated fields of maiz. The latter Indians still manufacture earthen vases,[59] similar to those which are found in the ancient tombs of the savages of the United States, and which, according to antiquaries, are presumed to have belonged to a race much more ancient than that which now peoples the desert of the west. The jugglers of the Arikaras enjoy a good reputation, and exercise considerable influence over their credulous countrymen; they pretend to have communication with the spirit [58] of darkness.[60] They will fearlessly plunge their arm into boiling water, having previously rubbed it with a certain root; they also swallow, without any ill effect, substances on fire, as well as shoot arrows against themselves. The following is one of the most singular of their tricks, and one which the Indian sor-

[59] Consult references cited in our volume xxiii, p. 279, note 245.— Ed.

[60] See the brief account of Arikara jugglers in Maximilian's *Travels*, our volume xxiii, pp. 393, 394.— Ed.

cerer was unwilling to perform in my presence, because *my medicine* (meaning my religion) *was superior to his*. He had his hands, arms, legs, and feet, tied with well-knotted cords; he was then enclosed in a net, and again in a buffalo's skin. The person who tied him had promised him a horse if he extricated himself from his bonds. In a minute after, the savage, to the amazement of the spectators, stood before him perfectly free. The commandant of the neighbouring fort offered him another horse, if he would reveal to him his secret. The sorcerer consented, saying, "Have thyself tied; I have at my command ten invisible spirits: I will detach three of them and put them at thy service: fear them not, they will accompany thee everywhere, and be thy tutelary genii." The commandant was disconcerted, or unwilling to make the trial, and thus the matter terminated.[61]

The last observation which I have to make concerns the redoubtable tribe of the Scioux. Whoever, amongst these savages, dies in a quarrel provoked by drunkenness, or as [59] the victim of the revenge of a fellow countryman, receives not the ordinary honours of burial; he is interred without ceremony and without provisions. The most glorious death for them is to expire in fighting the enemies of their nation. Their bodies are, in that case, rolled in buffaloes' skins and placed upon a raised platform, near their camps or highways.[62] From some conversations I

[61] Juggleries are much practised among the savages, although many of them consider them as so many impostures. Mr. Belcourt, who witnessed a great many of them, always succeeded in discovering the deception. One of the most celebrated jugglers acknowledged, after his conversion to Christianity, that all their delusion consists in their cleverness in preparing certain tricks, and in the assurance with which they predict to others what they themselves know not, and, above all, in the silly credulity of their admirers. They are like our own calculators of horoscopes. — *Extract from the Journal of a Missionary in Canada.* — De Smet.

[62] For references on burial customs among the Indians of the Missouri, see Maximillian's *Travels*, in our volume xxiii, p. 360, note 329.—Ed.

have had with the chiefs of this tribe, I have every reason to believe that a mission would produce amongst them the most consoling effects.

I arrived, at length, at Council Bluffs. It would be vain for me to attempt to express what I felt, on finding myself again in the midst of my brethren: I had travelled two thousand Flemish leagues amongst the most barbarous nations, where I had no sooner escaped one danger than I met with another. From Council Bluffs to Westport, a frontier city of the Missouri, I pursued my journey without obstacle or accident. At Independence,[63] I took the public conveyance, and on the eve of the new year, I embraced my dear Fathers of the University of St. Louis.

Recommending myself to your prayers,

I am yours, &c

P. J. De Smet.

LETTER III

Banks of the Platte, 2d June, 1841.

Rev. and Very Dear Father Provincial:

Behold us at last on our way towards the long wished for "Rocky Mountains," already inured to the fatigues of the journey and full of the brightest hopes. It is now afternoon and we are sitting on the banks of a river, which, it is said, has not its equal in the world. The Indians call it Nebraska or Big Horn; the Canadians give it the name of la Platte, and Irving designates it as the most wonderful and useless of rivers. The sequel will show that it deserves these various affixes. It was to enjoy the freshness and beauty of its scenery that we travelled more than twenty

[63] For a sketch of Independence, Missouri, see Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies* in our volume xix, p. 189, note 34.— Ed.

miles this morning, without breaking our fast, through a wilderness without a single rivulet to water our jaded horses, who must therefore rest where they are till to-morrow. I am far from regretting the delay as it will give me an opportunity of commencing a letter which, I know, will interest you.

Like all the works of God, our humble beginnings have not been unattended with trials: our journey had even well nigh been indefinitely postponed by the unexpected non-arrival of two caravans on which we had confidently relied; one of hunters, for the American Fur Company; the other an exploring expedition belonging to the United States, at the head of which we expected to see the celebrated M. Nicolet.[64] Happily God inspired two estimable travellers, [61] of whom more hereafter, and afterwards sixty others, to take the same route as ourselves, some for health, others for science, or pleasure; but the greater number to seek their fortune in the too highly boasted land of California. This caravan formed an extraordinary mixture of different nations, every country of Europe having in it a representative, my own little band of eleven persons hailing from eight.[65]

[64] De Smet had been associated with Nicollet in his exploration of the Missouri River in 1839. Nicollet intended another expedition westward, but was detained in Washington by business connected with the publication of his hydrographical map, and the report to Congress, and was never again in the Western country. See his letter in Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, iv, pp. 1552, 1553.

Jean Nicolas Nicollet was born in Savoy in 1786. After being educated in Switzerland, he was for a time assistant professor of mathematics at Chambery, and later librarian and secretary at the Paris observatory under the celebrated La Place. In 1832 he came to America, and occupied himself in scientific exploration of the Arkansas and Red rivers. In 1836 he made his well-known voyage to the sources of the Mississippi, and in 1839 explored the Missouri, crossing over to the Red River Valley, being accompanied on this expedition by John C. Frémont. The following years, until his death in 1843, he was employed in government service at Washington.— Ed.

[65] This was the first overland emigrant train to California, composed of members of the Western Emigration Society, organized in the winter of 1840-41 in

The difficulties of setting out once overcome, many others followed in succession. We had need of provisions, fire-arms, implements of every kind, waggons, guides, a good hunter, an experienced captain,—in a word, whatever becomes necessary when one has to traverse a desert of eight hundred leagues, and expects nothing but formidable obstacles to surmount, and thieving, and sometimes murderous, enemies to combat,—and swamps, ravines and rivers to cross, and mountains to climb, whose craggy and precipitous sides suddenly arrest our progress, compelling us to drag our beasts of burden up their steep ascents. These things are not done without toil and money, but thanks to the generous charity of our friends in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Kentucky, St. Louis and New Orleans,[66] which place I visited in person and which is always at the head of the others when there is a question of relieving the necessities of the poor, or showing compassion and munificence to any who may be in need of assistance, we were enabled by the resources thence supplied, and by a portion of the funds allowed by the Lyons Association in behalf of the Indian Missions, to undertake this long journey.

You have already learned from my letters of the past year, that I was specially sent among the Flat Heads to ascertain their dispositions towards the "Black Robes," whom they had so long desired. I therefore started from [62] St. Louis in April, 1840, and arrived on the banks of

Platte County, Missouri, under the stimulus of reports of the fertility and beauty of California, brought back by one of the Roubidoux brothers. Discouraged by contrary accounts, most of the members of the society withdrew, leaving John Bidwell to organize the caravan, which finally consisted of sixty-nine persons, exclusive of De Smet's party. See Bidwell's account in *Century Magazine*, xix, pp. 106-120. De Smet's party of eleven consisted of the priests and brothers, one guide, one hunter, and three French Canadian drivers.—Ed.

[66] See De Smet's letter on securing funds, and preparations, in Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, i, pp. 272-275.— Ed.

the Colorado precisely at the moment when a band of Flat Heads reached that point on their way to meet me. It was the rendezvous I had given them. Besides the Flat Heads I visited during that journey, many other tribes, such as the Pends-d'oreilles (Ear Rings), Nez Perces (Pierced Noses), Cheyennes, Serpents, Crows, Gros ventres or Minatarees, Ricaras, Mandans, Kanzas, the numerous nations of the Scioux, &c. Finding every where such good dispositions, I resolved, notwithstanding the approach of winter and frequent attacks of fever, in order to second the visible designs of the divine mercy in favor of so many souls, to commence my journey across the immense ocean of mountains and prairies. I have travelled without any other guide than a compass, without any protection from nations hostile to the whites, but a veteran from Ghent, formerly a grenadier of the Empire, any other provisions in an arid desert, than what powder and ball and a strong confidence in God might procure us. I shall not here repeat what I have already communicated to you, of my adventures and the result of this mission. It will suffice to say, that the unexpected quickness of my return to St. Louis, the excellent health I enjoyed, even though it was the midst of winter, and the consoling accounts I had to give of my reception by the Flat Heads, &c. &c., all contributed to make the most lively impression on the hearts of our brethren. Almost every one thought himself called to share the labors of a mission which offered so many attractions to their zeal. After due deliberation, the fellow-laborers allotted me were five in number, namely two Fathers, Rev. Mr. Point [67] of La Vendee, as zealous and

[67] Father Nicolas Point was sojourning at Westport when De Smet returned from his first mission to the Flatheads. Selected to accompany the new mission, Father Point served at St. Mary's until 1842, when after a summer with the Indians on a buffalo hunt, he founded in the autumn of that year the Cœur d'Alène mission. This he made the seat of his work until his recall in 1846. On his

courageous for the salvation of souls as his compatriot, La Roche Jacquelin[68] was in the service of his lawful sovereign; Rev. Mr. Mengarini, recently from [63] Rome, specially selected by the Father General himself, for this mission, on account of his age, his virtues, his great facility for languages and his knowledge of medicine and music;[69] and three lay-brothers, two Belgians, Claessens and Huet, and one German, of whom the first is a blacksmith, the second a carpenter, and the third a tinner, or a sort of *factotum*;[70] all three industrious, devoted to the Missions and

---

return journey he spent some months among the Blackfeet, laying the foundation for the work that later ripened into St. Peter's mission. He baptized over six hundred persons, chiefly children, and turned to much advantage his talent for drawing, whereby he attracted the indifferent tribesmen. He passed the ensuing winter at Fort Union, where he exercised a salutary restraint over the lawless traders and half-breeds. See Historical Society of Montana *Contributions*, iii, pp. 246-248. The next spring he was sent to Upper Canada, and died at Quebec in 1868.— Ed.

[68] Henri de Verger, count de La Rochejacquelein (1772-94), was one of the most popular generals of the Vendéan peasants, during their revolt against the republic of the French Revolution. He had been a member of the king's guard, but after the famous Tenth of August retreated to his ancestral home, and there put himself at the head of the uprising, and although but twenty-one years of age was chosen general-in-chief (1793). His courage and military daring made him the favorite hero of the royalists. He was killed by a republican soldier.— Ed.

[69] Father Gregory Mengarini remained in charge of the Flathead mission at St. Mary's until 1850. He was an accomplished linguist, and so mastered the Indian dialect that by means of his speech he could pass for a Flathead. He printed a Salishan grammar (1861), and prepared a Salishan-English dictionary. In 1850 it was decided to abandon St. Mary's for a time, whereupon Father Mengarini retired to the newly-established Jesuit college at Santa Clara, California, where he died in 1886. For his portrait see Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest*, p. 31.— Ed.

[70] William Claessens lived at the Flathead mission until near the close of his life. Ordered to Santa Clara, California, to rest, he died there (October 11, 1891), just after celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his entrance upon missionary work. For his portrait see *ibid.*, p. 62.

Joseph Specht never permanently left the Flathead mission, dying at St. Ignatius in 1884, one of the oldest white inhabitants of Montana. For his portrait see *ibid.*, p. 60.

Charles Huet joined Father Point in establishing the Cœur d'Alène mission. See *ante*, note 67.— Ed.

full of good will. They had long ardently desired to be employed on these missions and I thank God that had the choice been left to myself, I could have made none better. Thus launched into the midst of this interminable Far West, how often did I repeat these beautiful lines of Racine:

> O Dieu, par quelles routes inconnues aux mortels
> Ta Sagesse conduit tes desseins eternels!

In seven days from my departure from St. Louis, namely, on the 30th of April, I arrived at Westport, a frontier town on the West of the United States. It took us seven days, on board a steamboat,[71] to perform this journey of 900 miles, no unfair average of the time required to travel such a distance on the Missouri, at the breaking up of the winter, when, though the ice is melted, the water is still so low, the sand banks so close together and the snags so numerous that boats cannot make greater headway. . . . We landed on the right bank of the river, and took refuge in an abandoned little cabin, where a poor Indian woman had died a few days before, and in this retreat, so like to that which once merited the preference of the Saviour and for which was thenceforth to be substituted only the shelter of a tent in the wilderness, we took up our abode until the 10th May — occupied as well we might be in supplying the wants created by the burning of our baggage waggon on board the steamboat, the sickness of one of our horses [64] which we were compelled to leave after us, and the loss of another that escaped from us at the moment of landing.

We started, then, from Westport, on the 10th of May, and after having passed by the lands of the Shawnees and Delawares, where we saw nothing remarkable but the college of the Methodists,[72] built, it is easy to divine for what,

---

[71] De Smet went up to Westport by the "Oceana," a steamboat of about 300 tons, built in 1836.— Ed.

[72] A mission school was established among the Shawnee in 1829 by Reverend

Kanza Village

where the soil is richest; we arrived after five day's march on the banks of the Kanzas river, where we found those of our companions, who had travelled by water, with a part of our baggage.[73] Two of the relatives of the grand chief had come twenty miles from that place to meet us, one of whom helped our horses to pass the river in safety, by swimming before them, and the other announced our arrival to the principal men of the tribe who waited for us on the opposite bank. Our baggage, waggons and men crossed in a pirogue, which, at a distance, looked like one of those gondolas that glide through the streets of Venice. As soon as the Kanzas understood that we were going to encamp on the banks of the Soldier's River,[74] which is only six miles from the village, they galloped rapidly away from our Caravan, disappearing in a cloud of dust, so that we had scarcely pitched our tents when the great Chief presented himself with six of his bravest warriors, to bid us welcome. After having made me sit down on a mat spread on the ground, he, with much solemnity, took from his pocket a Portfolio containing the honorable titles that gave him a right to our friendship and placed them in my hands. I read them, and having, with the tact of a man accustomed to the etiquette of savage life, furnished him the means of smoking the Calumet, he made us accept for our guard the two braves who had come to meet us. Both were armed like warriors, one carrying a lance and a buckler, and the

---

Thomas Johnson of the Missouri conference of the Methodist church, and was conducted by that missionary and his wife, and Reverend and Mrs. William Johnson. In 1839 the school was removed to a location about two miles southwest of Westport, where a grant of land was secured, and an industrial school maintained for Indian children until 1862.— Ed.

[73] For the early stretch of the Oregon Trail see Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 49, note 30. The California emigrants were met at Sapling Grove.

For the Kansa Indians see our volume v, p. 67, note 37.— Ed.

[74] Soldier's Creek, a northern tributary of the Kansas, entering the latter just below Topeka, near the Kansas River fording place.— Ed.

other a bow and arrows, with a naked sword and a collar [65] made of the claws of four bears which he had killed with his own hand. These two braves remained faithful at their post during the three days and three nights that we had to wait the coming up of the stragglers of the caravan. A small present which we made them at our departure, secured us their friendship.

On the 19th we continued our journey to the number of seventy souls, fifty of whom were capable of managing the rifle — a force more than sufficient to undertake with prudence the long march we had to make. Whilst the rest of our company inclined to the West, Father Point, a young Englishman and myself turned to the left, to visit the nearest village of our hosts.[75] At the first sight of their wigwams, we were struck at the resemblance they bore to the large stacks of wheat which cover our fields in harvest-time. There were of these in all no more than about twenty, grouped together without order, but each covering a space of about one hundred and twenty feet in circumference, and sufficient to shelter from thirty to forty persons. The entire village appeared to us to consist of from seven to eight hundred souls — an approximation which is justified by the fact that the total population of the tribe is confined to two villages, together numbering 1900 inhabitants. These cabins, however humble they may appear, are solidly built and convenient. From the top of the wall, which is about six feet in height, rise inclined poles, which terminate round an opening above, serving at once for

[75] The Englishman's name was Romaine. He had come up from New Orleans on a hunting trip, and accompanied the caravan as far as Green River. De Smet testifies to his engaging qualities, his skill as a hunter, and his courtesy in camp.

The Kansa village here visited was near the mouth of Vermillion Creek, in Pottawatomie County (not to be confused with the Black Vermillion, tributary of the Big Blue). When Frémont passed this way in 1842, the village was deserted, having the preceding spring suffered a Pawnee attack.— Ed.

chimney and window. The door of the edifice consists of an undressed hide on the most sheltered side, the hearth occupies the centre and is in the midst of four upright posts destined to support the *rotunda*; the beds are ranged round the wall and the space between the beds and the hearth is occupied by the members [66] of the family, some standing, others sitting or lying on skins, or yellow colored mats. It would seem that this last named article is regarded as a piece of extra finery, for the lodge assigned to us had one of them.[76]

It would be difficult to describe all the curiosities we beheld during the hour we passed among these truly strange beings; a Teniers would have envied us. What most excited our attention was the peculiar physiognomy of the greater number of these personages, their vivacity of expression, singular costume, diversity of amusement and fantastic attitudes and gestures. The women alone were occupied, and in order to attend to their various duties with less distraction, they had placed those of their papooses who were unable to walk, on beds or on the floor, or at their feet, each tightly swathed and fastened to a board, to preserve it from being injured by surrounding objects. This machine, which I shall not call either cradle or chair, is carried, when they travel, either on the back, after the fashion of the gypsies and fortune-tellers in Europe, or at their side, or more frequently, suspended from the pummel of the saddle, while they lead or drive their ponies, laden with the rest of their goods and chattels. With such encumbrances they manage to keep pace with their husbands, who generally keep their horses at a gallop. But let us return to our wigwam. How were the men occupied? When we entered, some were preparing to eat,

[76] For an earlier visit to a Kansa village see our volume xiv, pp. 184-200. See also illustration of the interior of a Kansa lodge, *ibid.*, p. 208.— Ed.

(this is their great occupation when they are not asleep) others were smoking, discharging the fumes of the tobacco by their mouths and nostrils, reminding one of the funnels of a steamboat; they talked, they plucked out their beard and the hair of their eye-brows, they made their toilette; the head receiving particular attention. Contrary to the custom of the other tribes, who let the hair on their heads grow, (one of [67] the Crows has hair eleven feet long) the Kanzas shave theirs, with the exception of a well curled tuft on the crown, destined to be wreathed with the warrior's plume of eagle's feathers, the proudest ornament with which the human head can be adorned.[77] While we were smoking I could not help watching the motions of a young savage, a sort of dandy, who ceased not to arrange, over and over again, his bunch of feathers before a looking glass, apparently unable to give it the graceful finish he intended. — Father Point, having suffered his beard to grow, soon became an object of curiosity and laughter, to the children — a beardless chin and well picked brows and eye-lashes being, among them, indispensable to beauty. Next come the Plume and Slit-ears, with their pendants of beads and other trinkets. This is but a part of their finery, and the pains thus taken to reach the *beau-ideal* of personal decorations, are but a faint specimen of their vanity. Do you wish to have an idea of a Kanza satisfied with himself in the highest degree? Picture him to yourself with rings of vermillion encircling his eyes, with white, black, or red streaks running down his face, a fantastic necklace, adorned in the center with a large medal of silver or copper, dangling on his breast; bracelets of tin, copper, or brass, on his arms and wrists; a cincture of white around his waist, a cutlass and scabbard, embroidered shoes or mocasins on his feet; and, to crown all, a mantle, it mat-

[77] See more detailed description in our volume xiv, pp. 196, 197.— Ed.

ters not for the color, thrown over the shoulders and falling around the body in such folds or drapery as the wants or caprice of the wearer may direct, and the individual stands before you as he exhibited himself to us.

As for dress, manners, religion, modes of making war, &c., the Kanzas are like the savages of their neighborhood, with whom they have preserved peaceful and friendly relations [68] from time immemorial. In stature, they are generally tall and well made. Their physiognomy is manly, their language is guttural, and remarkable for the length and strong accentation of the final syllables. Their style of singing is monotonous, whence it may be inferred that the enchanting music heard on the rivers of Paraguay, never cheers the voyager on the otherwise beautiful streams of the country of the Kanzas.

With regard to the qualities which distinguish man from the brute, they are far from being deficient. To bodily strength and courage they unite a shrewdness and address superior to other savages, and in their wars or the chase, they make a dexterous use of fire arms, which gives them a decided advantage over their enemies.

Among the chiefs of this tribe are found men really distinguished in many respects. The most celebrated was "White Plume," whom the author of the Conquest of Grenada represents as a man of great powers of mind and chivalrous character.[78] He was endowed with uncommon intelligence, frankness, generosity and courage. He had been particularly acquainted with Rev. Mr. De la Croix, one of the first Catholic Missionaries that visited that part of the West, and conceived for him and his colleagues, the "Black Robes" profound esteem.[79] His feel-

[78] For this noted chief see our volume xiv, p. 177, note 144. Washington Irving's semi-humorous description of him occurs in *The Rocky Mountains* (Captain Bonneville's Journal), chapter ii.— Ed.

[79] Charles de la Croix, born at Hoorebeke, Belgium, 1792, was impressed

ings towards the Protestant Missionaries were far different. He had neither esteem nor veneration for them or their reformation. When on a certain occasion one of them spoke to him of conversion; "conversion," said the unsophisticated savage, "is a good thing when the change is made for something good. For my part, I know none such but what is taught and practised by the Black Robes. If then you desire me to change, you must first quit your wife and then put on the habit I shall show you, and then we shall [69] see further." This habit was a priest's cassock, which a missionary had left him with the memory of his virtues.— We presume we need not add that these hard conditions were not complied with by the preacher.

It is not to be inferred from the apparent pleasantry of this remark that the chief spoke lightly of Religion; on the contrary, the Kanzas, like all the Indian tribes, never speak on the subject without becoming solemnity. The more they are observed the more evident does it become that the religious sentiment is deeply implanted in their souls, and is, of all others, that which is most frequently expressed by their words and actions. Thus, for instance, they never take the calumet, without first rendering some homage to the Great Spirit. In the midst of their most infuriate passions they address him certain prayers, and even in assassinating a defenceless child, or a woman, they invoke the Master of life. To be enabled to take many a scalp from their enemies, or to rob them of many

into the imperial guards; but escaping with difficulty from Paris in 1814, was ordained for the American mission. He arrived in the United States in 1817, at first being made pastor at Barrens, Missouri. In 1820 he became curé at Florissant, whence he made two visits (1821-22) to the territory of the Osage, but was compelled by illness to return. Upon the coming of the Jesuits to Florissant (1823) he resigned his charge to them, becoming pastor of St. Michael's parish, Louisiana, where he remained until failing health made necessary his return to Europe (1834). He served as canon of the cathedral at Ghent until his death in 1869.— Ed.

Interior of a Kanza Lodge

horses, becomes the object of their most fervid prayers, to which they sometimes add fasts, macerations and sacrifices. What did they not do last spring, to render the heavens propitious? And for what? To obtain the power, in the absence of their warriors, to massacre all the women and children of the Pawnees! And in effect they carried off the scalps of ninety victims, and made prisoners of all whom they did not think proper to kill. In their eyes, revenge, far from being a horrible vice, is the first of virtues, the distinctive mark of great souls, and a complete vindication of the most atrocious cruelty. It would be time lost to attempt to persuade them that there can be neither merit, nor glory, in the murder of a disarmed and helpless foe. There is but one exception to this barbarous code, it is when an enemy voluntarily seeks a refuge in one of their villages. As long as [70] he remains in it, his asylum is inviolable — his life is more safe than it would be in his own wigwam. But wo to him if he attempt to fly — scarcely has he taken a single step, before he restores to his hosts all the imaginary rights which the spirit of vengeance had given them to his life! However cruel they may be to their foes, the Kanzas are no strangers to the tenderest sentiments of piety, friendship and compassion. They are often inconsolable for the death of their relations, and leave nothing undone to give proof of their sorrow. Then only do they suffer their hair to grow — long hair being a sign of long mourning. The principal chief apologised for the length of his hair, informing us, of what we could have divined from the sadness of his countenance, that he had lost his son. I wish I could represent to you the respect, astonishment and compassion, expressed on the countenances of three others, when they visited our little Chapel for the first time.[80] When we

[80] De Smet probably intends the chapel at Westport, where Father Point was stationed before his departure for the Flathead country.— Ed.

showed them an "Ecce Homo" and a statue of our Lady of the seven Dolours, and the interpreter explained to them that that head crowned with thorns, and that countenance defiled with insults, were the true and real image of a God who had died for the love of us, and that the heart they saw pierced with seven swords, was the heart of his mother, we beheld an affecting illustration of the beautiful thought of Tertullian, that the soul of man is naturally Christian! On such occasions, it is surely not difficult, after a short instruction on true faith and the love of God, to excite feelings of pity for their fellow creatures in the most ferocious bosoms. What were the Iroquois before their conversions, and what have they not since become? Why do the Kanzas and so many other tribes on the confines of civilization, still retain that savage ferocity of manners? Why have the great sums expended in their behalf by Protestant philanthropy [71] produced no satisfactory results? Why are the germs of civilization so thickly scattered among these tribes, as it were, stricken with sterility? Ah! it is doubtless, because something more than human policy and zeal of Protestantism is necessary to civilize the savages and make them Christians. May the God of Mercies, in whom we alone place all our trust, bless our undertaking and enable us to predict that our sweat, mixed with the fertilizing dew of heaven, will fall auspiciously on this long barren earth, and make it produce something else besides briars and thorns! When we took leave of our hospitable hosts, two of their warriors, to one of whom they gave the title of Captain, escorted us a short distance on the road, which lay through a vast field which had been cleared and planted for them by the United States, but which had been ravaged before the harvest home — sad proof of what we have stated above.

Our escort continued with us until the day following, and

would have remained with us still longer, did they not fear the terrible reprisals of the Pawnees, for the massacre committed some months previously. Having therefore received our thanks and a portion of tobacco, they resumed the road to their village, just in time to escape the vengeance of a party of Pawnees, whom we met two days later, in quest of the Kanzas!

The Pawnees are divided into four tribes, scattered over the fertile borders of the Platte River.[81] Though six times more numerous than the Kanzas, they have almost on every occasion been conquered by the latter, because they are far inferior to them in the use of arms, and in strength and courage. Yet as the party just mentioned seemed to have adopted decisive measures, and as their thirst of revenge had been stimulated to the highest degree by the still fresh recollection of what their mothers, their wives and children [72] had suffered, we had reason to fear for the Kanzas. Already we fancied that we saw the blood streaming on all sides, when, two days after we had passed them, we saw them return to meet us. The two first who approached us, excited our attention, the one by a human scalp, which hung suspended from the neck of his horse, the other by an American flag, which he had wrapped around his body, in the form of a cloak. This kind of attire made us tremble for the fate of our hosts; but the captain of the caravan having asked them by signs concerning the result of their expedition, they informed us that they had not even seen the enemy, and that they suffered much from the cravings of hunger. We gave to them, and to about fifteen others who followed them, both victuals and tobacco. They devoured the victuals, but did not

[81] For the Pawnee bands see our volume xiv, p. 233, note 179. Their depredations were nearly as much dreaded by the traders on the southern routes, as those of the Blackfeet were in northern climes.— Ed.

smoke; and, contrary to the custom of the Indians, who generally expect to get a second meal after the first, they left us in a manner which indicated that they were dissatisfied. The suddenness of their departure, their refusal to smoke the calumet, the unexpected return of their party, the neighborhood of their villages, and their well known love of plunder — in short, every thing induced us to fear that they had some design to make an attempt, if not upon our persons, at least upon the baggage; but, God be praised, not one re-appeared after the departure of the party.

Though addicted to the practice of lying and stealing, yet, what must appear wonderful, the Pawnees are in some respects true believers, with regard to the certainty of a future life, and display a pharisaical punctuality in the observance of their superstitious rites. Dancing and music, as well as fasting, prayer and sacrifice, form an essential part of their worship. The most common worship among them is that which they offer to a stuffed bird, filled with [73] herbs and roots, to which they attribute a supernatural virtue.[82] They protest that this Manitoo had been sent to their ancestors by the Morning Star, to be their mediator when they should stand in need of some particular favor.—Hence, whenever they enter upon some important undertaking, or wish to avert some great evil, they expose the Mediator-bird to public veneration; and in order to render both him and the Great Manitoo (or Spirit) by whom he is sent, propitious to them, they smoke the calumet, and blow the first smoke that issues from it towards the part of the sky where shines their protectress.

On the most solemn occasions the Pawnees add a bloody

[82] De Smet refers here to the medicine bundle. One of these belonged to each family of importance, and a still more sacred one to each band of the tribe. Its contents were various, frequently containing skins of sacred birds, although not exclusively so composed. See John B. Dunbar, "Pawnee Indians," in *Magazine of American History*, viii, pp. 738-741.— Ed.

sacrifice to the oblation of the calumet; and according to what they pretend to have learned from the bird and the Star, the sacrifice most agreeable to the Great Spirit is that of an enemy immolated in the most cruel manner. It is impossible to listen without horror to the recital of the circumstances that attended the sacrifice of a young female, of the Scioux tribe, in the course of the year 1837. It was about seed time, and they thus sought to obtain a plentiful harvest. I shall here give the substance of the detailed account, which I have given of it in a former letter. This young girl, was only aged fifteen; after having been well treated and fed for six months, under pretence that a feast would be prepared for her at the opening of the summer season, felt rejoiced when she saw the last days of winter roll by. The day fixed upon for the feast having dawned, she passed through all the preparatory ceremonies, and was then arrayed in her finest attire, after which she was placed in a circle of warriors, who seemed to escort her for the purpose of showing her deference. Besides their wonted arms, each one of these warriors had two pieces of wood, which he had received at the hands of the maiden. The [74] latter had on the preceding day carried three posts, which she had helped to fell in the neighboring forest: but supposing that she was walking to a triumph, and her mind being filled with the most pleasing ideas, the victim advanced towards the place of her sacrifice with those mingled feelings of joy and timidity, which, under similar circumstances, are naturally excited in the bosom of a girl of her age.

During their march, which was rather long, the silence was interrupted only by religious songs and invocations to the Master of life, so that whatever affected the senses, tended to keep up the deceitful delusion under which she had been till that moment. But as soon as she had reached

the place of sacrifice, where nothing was seen but fires, torches, and instruments of torture, the delusion began to vanish and her eyes were opened to the fate that awaited her. How great must have been the surprise, and soon after the terror which she felt, when she found it no longer possible to doubt of their intentions? Who could describe her poignant anguish? She burst into tears; she raised loud cries to heaven — she begged, entreated, conjured her executioners to have pity on her youth, her innocence, her parents, but all in vain: neither tears, nor cries, nor the promises of a trader who happened to be present, softened the hearts of these monsters. She was tied with ropes to the trunk and branches of two trees, and the most sensitive parts of her body were burnt with torches made of the wood which she had with her own hands distributed to the warriors.— When her sufferings lasted long enough to weary the fanatical fury of her ferocious tormentors, the great chief shot an arrow into her heart; and in an instant this arrow was followed by a thousand others, which, after having been violently turned and twisted in the wounds, were torn from them in such a manner that her whole body presented but [75] one shapeless mass of mangled flesh, from which the blood streamed on all sides. When the blood had ceased to flow, the greater sacrificator approached the expiring victim, and to crown so many atrocious acts, tore out her heart with his own hands, and after uttering the most frightful imprecations against the Scioux nation, devoured the bleeding flesh, amid the acclamations of his whole tribe. The mangled remains were then left to be preyed upon by wild beasts, and when the blood had been sprinkled on the seed, to render it fertile, all retired to their cabins, cheered with the hope of obtaining a copious harvest.[83]

[83] This custom of human sacrifice appears to have been confined to the Skidi

Such horrid cruelties could not but draw down the wrath of heaven upon their nation. And in fact, as soon as the report of the sacrifice reached the Scioux, they burned with the desire to avenge their honor, and swore to a man that they would not rest satisfied till they should have killed as many Pawnees as the young victim had bones in her fingers and joints in her body. More than a hundred Pawnees have at length fallen beneath their tomahawks, and their fury was afterwards more increased by the massacre of their wives and children, of which I have spoken before.

At the sight of so much cruelty, who could mistake the agency of the enemy of mankind, and who would refuse to exert himself for the purpose of bringing these benighted nations to the knowledge of the true Mediator, and of the only true sacrifice, without which, it is impossible to appease the divine justice.

Rev. and dear Father, yours,

P. J. De Smet, S.J.

---

or Loup band of Pawnee, and to have been abolished only with much difficulty. James's *Long's Expedition*, in our volume xv, pp. 151-155, relates the rescue of one such captive in 1817, and the apparent abolition of the custom. John T. Irving, Jr., *Indian Sketches* (Philadelphia, 1835), ii, pp. 146-153, describes an ineffectual attempt in 1831 to rescue a captive designed for this fate. The account given by De Smet of the sacrifice of 1837 appears to be authentic. Dunbar (*op. cit.* in preceding note) says that the last known instance occurred in April, 1838; but probably it has been repeated since. See also George B. Grinnell, *Pawnee Hero Stories and Folk Tales* (New York, 1893), pp. 363-369; and George A. Dorsey, "Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee," in American Folk Lore Society *Publications* (Boston, 1904), viii.— Ed.

LETTER IV

Eau Sucree,[84] 14th July, 1841.

Very Rev. and Dear Father Provincial:

ALREADY two long months have elapsed since we began our journey; but we are at length in sight of those dear mountains that have so long been the object of our desires.[85] They are called Rocky, because they are almost entirely formed of granite and silex, or flint stone. The length, position, and elevation of this truly wonderful chain of mountains, have induced geographers to give to it the appellation of "the back-bone of the western hemisphere." Traversing almost the whole of North America, from north to south,containing the sources of some of the largest streams of the world, this chain has for its branches, towards the west, "the spur of the Cordilleras," which divide the Empire of Mexico, and towards the east the less known but not less wonderful mountains of the Wind River, where are found the sources of the large streams that empty themselves into the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. The Black Hills and the table lands called Prairie hills, which separate the sources of the upper Missouri from those of the Mississippi, the Ozark and the Masserne ridges may all be considered as so many collateral chains of the Rocky Mountains.

According to trigonometrical calculations, and obser-

[84] Sweetwater River, for which see Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 53, note 33.— ED.

[85] The route followed from the point where the trail reached the Platte, was along the river to its forks, thence up the South Fork to its ford, across to the North Fork at Ash Creek, along the south bank of the former stream to the junction of the Laramie, thence continuing by the North Fork to its crossing, near the present Caspar, Wyoming, and along the north bank, across country to the Sweetwater, to avoid the cañon of the North Platte.— ED.

vations, made by means of the barometer, Mr. Boneville,[86] [77] in his Memoirs, asserts that the summits of some of these mountains are 25,000 feet high.[87] This height would appear much exaggerated, if we consulted only the testimony of the eyes, but it is well known that the mountains which are found in immense plains, are not unlike ships seen on the ocean; they appear much less elevated than they are in reality. Whatever may be the height of these colossal mountains, it was at their base that we hoped to meet our dear neophytes. But a messenger we had sent to acquaint them with our arrival, has just returned, and informed us that the Indians who lay encamped there, about a fortnight ago, went in a southerly direction to hunt the buffalo. We know not whether those Indians were Flat Heads or belong to another nation, and it is to obtain information on this subject, that we are going to despatch a second messenger. In the mean time, I shall continue my journal. The numerous notes, which, on account of our slow progress, we have been enabled to take on the spot, will warrant that exactness of description, which is the more desirable, as it is a quality frequently wanting in the accounts given of these distant regions. Not to exceed the bounds of a lengthy letter, I shall say but little concerning perspectives, flowers, birds, animals, Indians, and adventures.

With the exception of the mounds which run parallel to each other on both sides of the Platte river, and after passing under the Black Hills, disappear at the base of the Rocky Mountains, the whole plain which we traversed for 1500 miles after we had left Westport, might be called the

[86] For a brief sketch of Captain Bonneville, see our volume xx, p. 267, note 167.— Ed.

[87] The highest peaks of the Rocky Mountains, and of the whole Cordilleran system within the boundaries of the United States, do not much exceed fourteen thousand feet.— Ed.

Prairie Ocean. In fact, nearly the whole of this territory is of an undulating form, and the undulations resemble the billows of the sea when agitated by the storm. On the tops of some of these elevations we have seen shells and petrifactions, such as are found on several mountains in [78] Europe. No doubt, some impartial geologists may discover here, as they have done elsewhere, incontestible proofs of the deluge. A petrified fragment which I have in my possession, seems to contain a number of these shells.

In proportion as one removes from the banks of the Missouri or penetrates into the Western regions, the forests lose much in height, density and depth, in consequence of the scarcity of water. Soon after, only the rivers are lined with narrow skirts of wood, in which are seldom seen any lofty creeks. In the neighborhood of creeks and rivulets we generally find willow bushes, and where there is no water it would be vain to look for any thing but grass, and even this grass is only found in the fertile plains that lie between Westport and the Platte river.

This intimate connexion between rivers and forests is so striking to the eye, that our beasts of burden had not journeyed more than eight days through this desert, when we saw them in some manner exult and double their pace at the sight of the trees that appeared at a distance. This was chiefly observable when the day's journey had been rather long. This scarcity of wood in the western regions, so much at variance with what is seen in other parts of North America, proceeds from two principal causes. In the plains on this side of Platte river, from the custom which the Indians who live here have adopted, to fire their prairies towards the end of autumn, in order to have better pasture at the return of spring; but in the Far West, where the Indians do not follow this practice, (because they fear to drive away the animals that are necessary for their sub-

sistence, or to expose themselves to be discovered by the strolling parties of their enemies,) it proceeds from the nature of the soil, which being a mixture of sand and light earth, is every where so very barren that with the exception [79] of the absynth[88] that covers the plains, and the gloomy verdure that shades the mountains, vegetation is confined to the vicinity of rivers,— a circumstance which renders a journey through the Far West extremely long and tedious.

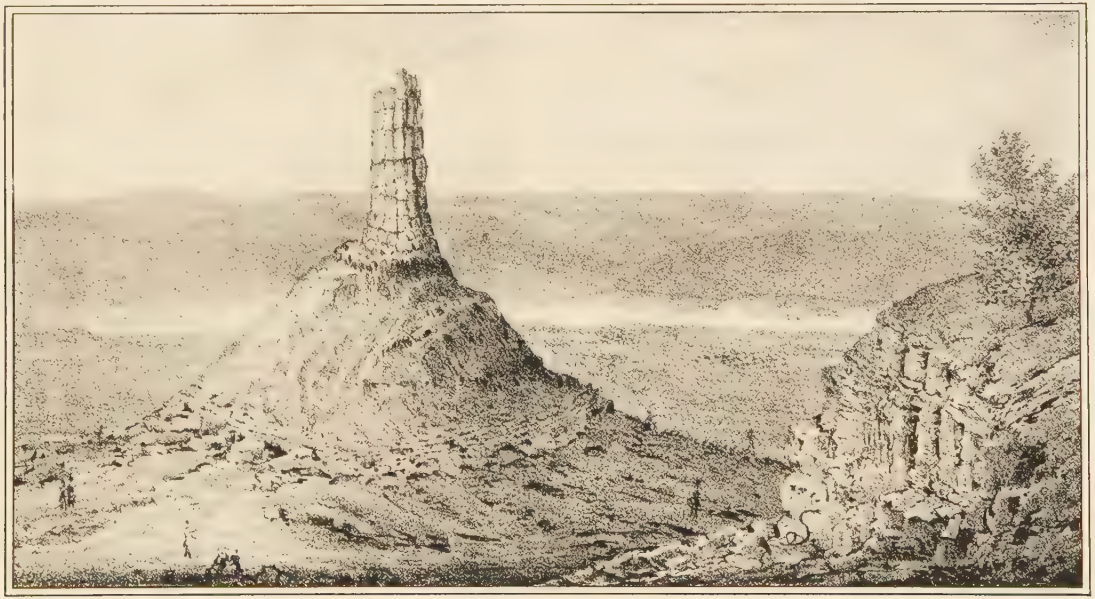
At considerable distances, chiefly between the Kants [Kansas] and the Platte rivers, are found blocks of granite of different sizes and colors. The reddish is the most common. In some of the stony parts of the Black Hills are also seen numberless quantities of small pebbles of all shades. I have seen some that were united into solid masses. If these were well polished they would present the appearance of fine mosaics. The columns of the House of Representatives in Washington are deemed very handsome, and are made of similar concretions.

On the feast of St. Peter a remarkable occurrence took place. We discovered an equally curious quarry, which, at first, we took for white marble, but we soon found it something more valuable. Astonished at the facility with which we could fashion this kind of stone into any shape, most of the travellers made calumets of it. I had several made myself, with the intention of offering them as presents to the Indians, so that for the space of forty-eight hours our camp was filled with lapidaries. But the greater number of these calumets could not withstand the action of the fire, and broke. It was alabaster.

The first rock which we saw, and which truly deserves the name, was the famous Rock Independence. It is of

[88] The sage-brush (*Artemisia tridentata*), the European species of which is known as wormwood or absinth (*A. absinthium*). See *ante*, p. 174, note 44.— Ed.

the same nature as the Rocky Mountains. At first I was led to believe that it had received this pompous name from its isolated situation and the solidity of its basis; but I was afterwards told that it was called so because the first travellers who thought of giving it a name, arrived at it on the very day when the people of the United States celebrate the [80] anniversary of their emancipation from Great Britain. We reached this spot on the day that immediately succeeds this celebration. We had in our company a young Englishman, as jealous of the honor of his nation as the Americans; hence we had a double reason not to cry hurra for Independence. Still, on the following day, lest it might be said that we passed this lofty monument of the desert with indifference, we cut our names on the south side of the rock, under initials (I. H. S.) which we would wish to see engraved on every spot. On account of all these names, and of the dates that accompany them, as well as of the hieroglyphics of Indian warriors, I have surnamed this Rock "the Great Record of the Desert." I shall add a few remarks about the mounds that are seen in the vicinity of the Platte river. The most remarkable of all, at least that which is best known to the generality of travellers, is the mound to which they have given the name of "chimney." It is called so on account of its extraordinary form; but instead of applying to it an appellation which is rather unworthy this wonder of nature, just because it bears some resemblance to the object after which it is named, it would have been more proper to call it "the inverted funnel," as there is no object which it resembles more. Its whole height, including the base, body and column, is scarce less than four or five hundred feet; the column or chimney is only about one hundred and thirty feet high, so that there is nothing striking in the loftiness of its dimensions. But what excites our astonishment, is



Chimney

the manner in which this remnant of a mountain, composed of sand and clay, has been so shaped, and how it has for such a length of time preserved this form, in spite of the winds that are so violent in these parts. It is true that this mound, and all those that are found near it, is composed of a successive number [81] of horizontal and perpendicular strata, and has about the middle a zone or belt, consisting of a vein of petrified clay. If from these two facts it would be inferred that at a certain height the substance of which the horizontal and perpendicular strata are formed, is susceptible of being hardened so as to approach the nature of stone, then we might perhaps account in some manner for the wonderful formation of this curious ornament. Yet the main difficulty would still remain, and we would at last be compelled to have recourse to the system of occult qualities. The existence of the chimney is therefore a problem, and if any scientific person should wish to solve it, I would advise him to repair to this monument without delay, as a cleft which is seen at the top, and which in all probability will soon extend to the base, threatens to leave nothing of it but the remembrance of its existence.[89]

The chimney is not the only remarkable mound to be met with in this vast solitude. There are many others of various forms. One is called "the House," another "the Castle," a third "the Fort," &c. And, in fact, if a traveller was not convinced that he journeys through a desert, where no other dwellings exist but the tents put up at night and removed in the morning, he would be induced to believe them so many ancient fortresses or Gothic castles and with a little imagination, based upon some historical

[89] Bidwell thus describes this landmark: "A noted landmark on the North Fork, which we sighted fifty miles away, was Chimney Rock. It was then nearly square, and I think it must have been fifty feet higher than now, though after we passed it a portion fell off." *Century Magazine*, xix, p. 118.— Ed.

knowledge, he might think himself transported amid the ancient mansions of Knight errantry. On one side are seen large ditches, and high walls; on the other, avenues, gardens and orchards; farther on, parks, ponds, and lofty trees. Sometimes the fancy presents a castle of the middle ages, and even conjures up the lord of the manor; but instead of all these magnificent remains of antiquity, we find only barren mounds on all sides, filled with cliffs formed by the falling [82] of the waters, and serving as dens to an infinite number of rattle snakes and other venomous reptiles.[90]

After the Missouri, which in the Far West is what the Mississippi is in the North, the finest rivers are the Kanzas, the Platte, and the Eau Sucree. The first of these falls into the Missouri, and receives the waters of a great number of tributary streams. Of these tributaries we counted as many as eighteen before we reached the Platte. Hence we may infer that the country abounds in springs, and that the soil is compact and covered with verdure. The reverse may be said of the neighborhood of the Platte, where springs and verdure are seldom seen. Even on the mounds that run parallel to its banks, the waters that fall from the clouds, upon a sandy and porous soil, run down into the vallies. But the prairies that receive the overflowing waters of the river are extremely fertile, and appear beautiful in spring, being enamelled with a great variety of flowers. The sight of the river itself is still more pleasing; though in spite of all its beauties, it has, like the most remarkable of its mounds, received a vulgar name. This proceeds from the custom which some travellers have of applying to objects the names of things with which they are well acquainted. They have called it *Platte* or Flat

[90] See engravings of these fantastically cut rocks in *Century Magazine*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.— Ed.

river, on account of its width and shallowness; the former often extending six thousand feet, whilst its depth is but from three to five feet, and sometimes less. This want of proportion destroys its utility. Canoes cannot be used to ascend it, and if barges sometimes come down from Fort La Ramee to the mouth, it is because they are so constructed that they may be converted into sledges and pushed on by the hands of men. The author of Astoria has properly defined it "the most magnificent and most useless of rivers." Abstraction made of its defects, nothing can be more pleasing [83] than the perspective which it presents to the eye; though besides the prairie flowers and the ranunculus, its banks bear only the eglantine and the wild vine; for on account of the fires made in the autumn the lofty vegetation is entirely confined to the islands that stud its surface. These islands are so numerous that they have the appearance of a labyrinth of groves floating on the waters. Their extraordinary position gives an air of youth and beauty to the whole scene. If to this be added the undulations of the river, the waving of the verdure, the alternations of light and shade, the succession of these islands varying in form and beauty, and the purity of the atmosphere, some idea may be formed of the pleasing sensations which the traveller experiences on beholding a scene that seems to have started into existence fresh from the hands of the creator. Fine weather is common in this temperate climate. However, it happens sometimes, though but seldom, that the clouds floating with great rapidity open currents of air so violent, as suddenly to chill the atmosphere and produce the most destructive hail storms. I have seen some hailstones of the size of an egg. It is dangerous to be abroad during these storms. A Sheyenne Indian was lately struck by a hailstone, and remained senseless for an hour. Once as the storm was

raging near us, we witnessed a sublime sight. A spiral abyss seemed to be suddenly formed in the air. The clouds followed each other into it with such velocity, that they attracted all objects around them, whilst such clouds as were too large and too far distant to feel its influence turned in an opposite direction. The noise we heard in the air was like that of a tempest. On beholding the conflict we fancied that all the winds had been let loose from the four points of the compass. It is very probable that if it had approached much nearer, the whole caravan [84] would have made an ascension into the clouds, but the Power that confines the sea to its boundaries and said — "Hitherto shalt thou come," watched over our preservation. The spiral column moved majestically towards the North, and alighted on the surface of the Platte. Then, another scene was exhibited to our view. The waters, agitated by its powerful action, began to turn round with frightful noise, and were suddenly drawn up to the clouds in a spiral form. The column appeared to measure a mile in height; and such was the violence of the winds which came down in a perpendicular direction, that in the twinkling of an eye the trees were torn and uprooted, and their boughs scattered in every direction.[91] But what is violent does not last. After a few minutes, the frightful visitation ceased. The column, not being able to sustain the weight at its base was dissolved almost as quickly as it had been formed. Soon after the sun re-appeared: all was calm and we pursued our journey. In proportion as we proceeded towards the sources of this wonderful river, the shades of vegetation became more gloomy, and the brows of the mountains more cragged. Every thing seemed to wear the aspect, not of decay, but of age, or rather of

[91] Bidwell mentions both the cyclone with its destructive hail, and the waterspout which passed a quarter of a mile behind the camp.— Ed.

venerable antiquity. Our joy was extatic as we sung the following Ode composed for the occasion:

Non ce n'est plus une ombre vaine,
Mes yeux ont vu, j'en suis certain,
Dans l'azur d'un brilliant lointain,
Des Monts Rocheux la haute chaine, &c.

O! no—it is no shadow vain,
That greets my sight—yon lofty chain
That pierces the ethereal blue;
The Rocky Mounts appear in view.

I've seen the spotless, virgin snow,
Glist'ning like gems upon their brow—
And o'er yon giant peak now streams
The golden light of day's first beams.

How from their ice-clad summits, steep,
The living waters joyous leap!
And gently on thro' vallies gay,
Sweeter than honey wend their way.

It is because on yon proud height,
The standard floats of life and light:
It is, that there th' Omnipotent
Hath pitched His everlasting tent—
The God whose love no tongue can tell,
Among his children deigns to dwell.

All hail! majestic Rock—the home
Where many a wand'rer yet shall come;
Where God himself, from His own heart
Shall health and peace and joy impart.

Sorrow adieu—farewell to fear,—
The sweet-voiced hymn of peace I hear;
Its tone hath touched the red-man's soul:
Lo! o'er his dark breast tear-drops roll.

O! soon the silent wilderness
Shall echo with his song of praise;
And infant lips, from morn till ev'n,
Shall chaunt thy love—great King of heav'n.

Father and God! how far above
All human thought, Thy wondrous love!
How strange the path by which Thy hand
Would lead the Tribes of this bleak land,
From darkness, crime and misery,
To live and reign in bliss with Thee!

As I have been speaking of rivers I shall give (you) a short geographical description of the Missouri, which I am [86] inclined to call my river, as I have so often ascended and descended it during the last four years, travelled along its banks, and crossed almost all its tributaries from the mouth of the Yellow Stone to the place where the mighty river mingles its turbid stream with that of the peaceful Mississippi. I have drunk the limpid waters of its sources, and the muddy waters at its mouth, distant more than three thousand miles from each other. The prodigious length of its course, the wildness and impetuosity of its current have induced the Scioux to call it "the *furious.*" Whenever I crossed this magnificent river the sensations which I experienced bordered on the sublime, and my imagination transported me through the world of prairies which it fertilises, to the colossal mountains whence it issues. It is in the heart of the Rocky Mountains that the Missouri takes its rise, together with many other magnificent streams; such as "the Father of Waters," into whose bosom it flows, after having fertilised its own borders to a vast extent,— the Arkansas, and the Red river, both, like itself, majestic tributaries; the Columbia, which becomes the reservoir of all the waters of the Oregon territory, and the Rio Colorado which after winding its course through a gloomy and rocky desert, invigorates the most beautiful part of California. The Missouri, properly so called, is formed by three considerable forks that unite their waters at the entrance of one of the passes of the Rocky mountains. The North fork is called "the Jackson," the South "the Gallatin," and the one between them "the Madison." [92] Each one of these is subdivided into several small arms that flow

[92] The three forks of the Missouri were named by Lewis and Clark (1805) in honor of the president of the United States and his chief advisers, the secretaries of state and of the treasury.— Ed.

from the mountains, and almost mingle their waters with those of the upper forks of the Columbia on the western side. I have drunk of both, distant only about fifty yards from each other; for the same field of snow supplies both the Atlantic [87] and Pacific oceans. After the junction of the forks, the Missouri for a considerable distance, becomes an impetuous and foaming torrent. Below this, its bed is more spacious, and its course more tranquil. Steep rocks of a black hue jut and rise above its current to a height of nearly a thousand feet. The mountains, along whose base it runs, are shaded by pines, cedars, fir and turpentine trees. Some of these mountains present a solitary aspect, and wear a look of unspeakable grandeur. The river, for the space of seventeen miles, is seen raging and foaming, rolling from cataract to cataract with a roaring noise that is repeated by all the neighboring echoes. The first of these cataracts measures ninety-eight feet in height; the second, nineteen; the third, forty-seven, and the fourth, twenty-six. Below the Falls, the beautiful river of Mary,[93] flowing from the North, adds its peaceful waters to those of the rapid and impetuous stream. Still lower, but on the opposite side, the Dearborn and the Fancy disembogue themselves through mouths respectively 150 feet in width.[94] After many other rivers of considerable width and extent, we come to the Yellow Stone, the largest but one of all the tributaries of the Missouri, and resembling the latter in many respects. This river too has its source in the Rocky Mountains, and is 850 yards wide at its mouth; its bed is spacious, its current rapid; its length is about 1600 miles,

[93] Maria's River, for which see our volume xxiii, p. 84, note 73.— Ed.

[94] Dearborn River, named by Lewis and Clark (1805) for the secretary of war, was in reality a western affluent above, not below, the Great Falls. By "Fancy," De Smet probably intends the stream named by Lewis and Clark "Tansy," but now known as Teton River — a tributary, however, of Maria's River, although approaching very near the Missouri.— Ed.

and at its confluence with the Missouri it appears to be the larger of the two. For a considerable distance above the mouth its banks are well wooded, and its bottom lands are extensive and very fertile.[95] The grey and black bear, the big horn, the antelope, the stag and the common deer frequent these regions, whilst coal and iron mines are in such abundance that for 50 years they might supply fuel and materials to a countless number of steam engines.

[88] After the Missouri has received the Yellow Stone river, its bottom lands become more extensive; yet as little or no wood is found on them, it may be long before attempts will be made to cultivate them. The White Earth river coming from the North, and the Goose river from the South, are not very considerable. The width of each at the mouth is 300 yards. The Little Missouri, though shallow, has a rapid current, and has its sources in the South, as also the following streams:[96] Cane river, near the village of the Mandans; Cannon Ball river, Winnipenhu, Sewarzena and Sheyenne river, which is navigable for 400 miles; a rapid and muddy stream, 400 yards at the mouth;[97] Teton river and White river, so called on account of the color of its waters, which are unwholesome. It is navigable for 300 miles, has a rapid current, and measures about 300 yards at its mouth. The lands which it waters in the upper country are barren, and abound in animal and vegetable petrifactions, whilst its banks have every where a fantastic appearance.[98] Next and on the same side we

[95] For the "Yellowstone" see our volume xxii, p. 375, note 351.— Ed.

[96] On these streams see Maximilian's *Travels*, in our volume xxii, pp. 367, 368, 369, notes 342, 344, 345.— Ed.

[97] For these rivers consult the following: Cane (Knife), our volume xxii, p. 357, note 333; Cannonball, *ibid.*, p. 338, note 306; Winnipenhu (Grand), our volume xxiv, p. 87, note 59; Sewarzena (Moreau), our volume v, p. 127, note 82; Cheyenne, *ibid.*, p. 126, note 81.— Ed.

[98] For Teton River, South Dakota, see our volume xxiv, p. 45, note 26; for White River and its "bad lands," *ibid.*, p. 90, note 64.— Ed.

meet the Poncas and Running Water river, the latter of which has a fine current. Medicine and Jacques rivers enter the Missouri from the opposite side; the latter is also called the rendezvous of the beaver hunters and runs nearly parallel with the Missouri.[99] After the White Stone and the Vermillion, we find the Big Scioux river, on which is found the fine red stone quarry explored by the Indians to make their calumets. The Floyd and the Roger, the Maringoin, the Nishnebatlana and the Nedowa fall into the Missouri on the Northern side.[100] Its chief tributary, the Platte, rises like itself in the Rocky Mountains and extends its course nearly two thousand miles. Though it be a mile wide at the mouth yet it is shallow, as its name indicates, and is not navigable, the two Nemahas flow from the South and the Little [89] Platte from the North.[101] The Kanzas, on the South side, is about a thousand miles long, and is navigable to a great distance. Grand river, from the North, is a wide, deep and navigable stream. The two Charetons are found on the same side, whilst the Osage and Gasconade rivers enter from the South. The former is an important stream, navigable for 600 miles, and having its sources near the waters of the Arkansas; whilst the latter, though navigable only for 66 miles, is equally impor-

[99] For Ponca Creek see our volume xxii, p. 291, note 253; the Niobrara (Running Water) is noted in our volume v, p. 90, note 54; the James (Jacques), in volume xxii, p. 282, note 238. Medicine is a small creek in northeastern Nebraska.— Ed.

[100] Whitestone is the name given by Lewis and Clark to the stream afterwards known as the Vermilion — see our volume vi, p. 87, note 31; for the Big Sioux see *ibid.*, p. 85, note 30; Floyd's Creek comes in just below the bluff of the same name, where Sergeant Charles Floyd of the Lewis and Clark expedition was buried — see our volume v, p. 91, note 56; the Boyer (Roger) is noted in our volume xxiv, p. 105, note 83; the Maringoin is probably intended for the Moingoina (Des Moines), a western tributary of the Mississippi; see our volume vi, p. 73, note 24, for the Nishnabotna; and v, p. 37, note 5, for the Nodaway (Nedowa).— Ed.

[101] For the Nemaha see our volume vi, p. 72, note 23; the Little Platte rises in Union County, southern Iowa, and flows southward through that part of Missouri known as the Platte purchase.— Ed.

tant, on account of the fine large pine forests that supply St. Louis and the adjacent country with lumber. I shall say nothing of the many other less remarkable tributaries of the Missouri, such as the Blue Water, the Mine, the Bonne Femme, the Manitoo, the Muddy, the Loutre, the Cedar, the Buffalo, the St. Johns, the Wood river, the Charette, Bonhomme, Femme Osage, &c.[102] The length of the Missouri, from its sources to the Yellow Stone, is 880 miles, from the Yellow Stone to its junction with the Mississippi, is about 2200. I subjoin a list of the Forks of its great tributaries which I have seen and crossed.

Beaver Head, Big Hole Fork, Stinking Water, Forks of the Jefferson, Powder River, Tongue River, Rose-bud River, Big Horn River, Clarke River, Rocky River, Traverse River, Loutre River, 25 Yard River, Gallatin River, Wind River, Forks of the Yellow Stone. Horn River, Wolf River, Bigwood River, North Fork River, South Fork River, Cabin Pole River, Horse River, La Ramee, Eau Sucree, Forks of the Platte. Grande Sableuse, Horse Shoe River, St. Peter's River, Red River, Kennion River, Deer River, The Torrent, Branches of the North Fork of the Platte. Soldier's River, Ouaggerehoosse River, Vermillion River, Black Vermillion River, Sick River, Knife River, Blue Waters, Forks of the Kanzas. Mary's River, [90] Big Bone, Yungar River, Potatoes River, Grand Fork, Forks of the Osage.

I left off my narrative on Sugar River, otherwise called Eau Sucree; I must interrupt it to listen to the good tidings that are brought from the mountains.

I remain, Rev. and Dear Father,

Your dutiful Son in Christ,

P. J. De Smet, S.J.

[102] These are all Missouri streams, mentioned for the most part by Lewis and Clark (see *Original Journals*, index). Upon Wood River (Du Bois) the expedition rendezvoused during the winter of 1803-04.— Ed.

LETTER V

Fort Hall, August 16th, 1841.

Rev. and Dear Father Provincial:

It was on the eve of the beautiful festival of the assumption that we met the vanguard of the Flat Heads. We met under the happiest auspices, and our joy was proportionate. The joy of the savage is not openly manifested — that of our dear neophytes was tranquil; but from the beaming serenity of their looks, and the feeling manner in which they pressed our hands, it was easy to perceive that, like the joy which has its source in virtue, theirs was heartfelt and profound. What had they not done to obtain a mission of "Black Gowns?" For twenty years they had not ceased to supplicate the Father of mercies; for twenty years, in compliance with the counsels of the poor Iroquois, who had established [91] themselves in their tribe, they had conformed, as nearly as they could, to our creed, our manners, and even to our religious practices. In what Catholic parish was the Sunday, for example, ever more religiously observed? — During the ten years just elapsed, four deputations, each starting from the banks of the Bitter Root, on which they usually assembled, had courageously ventured to St. Louis, over a space of 3,000 miles,— over mountains and vallies, infested by Black Feet and other hostile tribes.

Of the first deputation, which started in 1831, three died of diseases produced by the change of climate.[103] The second embassy reached its destination; but owing to the great want of missionaries in the Diocess of St. Louis,

[103] For this first deputation see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 138, note 13. The deputies apparently arrived in the autumn of 1831 and passed the winter in or near the city, where two of their number died. See Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, i, pp. 21, 22.— Ed.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

received nothing but promises. The third, which set out in 1837, consisted of five members, all of whom were unmercifully massacred by the Scioux.[104] All these crosses, however, were insufficient to abate their zeal. In 1839, they sent two Iroquois deputies, one of whom was named Peter, and the other "Young Ignatius,"[105] to distinguish him from another called "Old Ignatius." These they earnestly advised to make still more pressing entreaties to obtain the long sought blessing, a "Black Gown, to conduct them to heaven." Their prayers were, at length, heard, even beyond their hopes. One Black Gown was granted, together with a promise of more, if necessary for their greater good. While Peter returned in haste to the tribe to acquaint them with the complete success of their mission, Ignatius remained at Westport, to accompany the promised missionary. I had the happiness to be that missionary; I visited the nation, and became acquainted, in person, with their wants, their dispositions, and the necessities of the neighboring tribes. After an absence

[104] Both the second and third embassies were headed by the Iroquois Indian known as "Old Ignace," otherwise Ignace la Mousse, who was educated at the mission of Caughnawaga, and had gone to the Rocky Mountains between 1812 and 1820. The Iroquois were much employed by the North West Company and later by the Hudson's Bay Company, to assist fur-trading parties in the Far West. Ignace settled among the Flatheads, where he married, and taught the tribe the rudiments of the religion he had learned at the Canadian mission. Townsend (see our volume xxi) notes their observance of Sunday, and forms of worship. The delegation which Ignace undertook for the purpose of securing a "black robe," set out in 1835. His first intention was to visit Canada, but learning that Jesuits were at St. Louis he journeyed thither, taking with him his two sons to be baptized. See Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest*, pp. 19, 20, where a record of this baptism is given. Again in 1837, Ignace headed a second delegation. Upon the South Platte they were overtaken by a band of Sioux, who at first dismissed Ignace, for he was dressed as a white man. Unwilling to abandon his companions, he declared himself an Indian, whereupon all were killed after a brave defense.— Ed.

[105] Young Ignace, who accompanied Father de Smet on his first visit (1840) to the Flatheads, became a zealous convert, and lived at St. Ignatius mission until his death in the winter of 1875-76.— Ed.

of a year, I was now returning to them no longer alone, but with two Fathers, [92] three brothers, laborers and all that was essential to the success of the expedition. They themselves had travelled upwards of 800 miles to meet us, and now, that we were together, both parties were full of vigor and hope. What joy must not these good Indians, at that moment, have experienced. Being unable, however, to express their happiness, they were silent; their silence surely could not be ascribed to a deficiency of intelligence or a want of sentiment, for the Flat Heads are full of feeling, and many are truly intelligent. These, too, were the *elite* of the nation. Judge of it by what follows.

The chief of this little embassy pourtrayed himself in the following address to his companions, a few days subsequently on viewing the plan of the first hamlet: "My dear children," said he, "I am but an ignorant and wicked man, yet I thank the Great Spirit for the favors which he has conferred on us,— (and entering here into an admirable detail, he concluded thus:) Yes, my dear friends, my heart has found content; notwithstanding my wickedness I despair not of the goodness of God. Henceforth, I wish to live only that I may pray; I will never abandon prayer; (religion) I will pray until the end of my life, and when I die I will commit myself into the hands of the Author of life; if he condemn me, I shall submit to his will, for I have deserved punishment; if he save me, I shall bless him forever. Once more, then, my heart has found content.— What shall we do to evince the love we bear our fathers?" Here he made practical resolutions, but I must hasten to commemorate the zeal of each of those who formed the embassy.

Simon, who had been baptised the preceding year, was the oldest of the nation, and was so burdened with the weight of years, that even when seated, he needed a stick

[93] for his support. Yet, he had no sooner ascertained that we were on our route to join the tribe, than mounting his horse and mingling with the young warriors who were prepared to go forth to meet us, he said: "My children, I shall accompany you; if I die on the way, our Fathers, at least, will know the cause of my death." During the course of the journey, he repeatedly exhorted his companions: "courage, my children," he would say, "remember that we are going to the presence of our Fathers;" and urging his steed forward, whip in hand, he led on his youthful followers, at the rate of fifty miles per day.

Francis, a boy from six to seven years old, grand son of Simon, was an orphan from the very cradle. Having served at the altar, the preceding year, he would not be refused permission to accompany his grandfather: his heart told him that he was about to recover father and mother, and enjoy all the happiness that loving parents can bestow.

Ignatius, who had advised the fourth deputation, and had been a member of it,— who had succeeded in his mission, and introduced the first Black Gown into the tribe,— who had just recently exposed himself to new dangers, in order to introduce others, had crowned his zealous exertions by running for days without eating or drinking, solely that he might reach us the sooner.

Pilchimo, his companion and brother to one of the martyrs of the third deputation, was a young warrior, already reputed brave among the brave. The preceding year, his presence of mind and his courage had saved seventy of his brethren in arms from the fury of nearly nineteen hundred Black Feet.[106]

Francis Xavier was the son of old Ignatius, who had been the leader of the second and third deputation, and

[106] For further details of this exploit of Pilchimo see letter ix, *post*.— Ed.

had [94] fallen a victim to his devotion to the cause of religion and of his brethren. Francis Xavier had gone to St. Louis at the age of ten, in the company of his courageous father, solely that he might have the happiness of receiving baptism. He had finally attached himself without reserve to the service of the mission, and supplied our table with a daily mess of fish.[107]

Gabriel, who was of mixed blood, but an adopted child of the nation, was interpreter for the missionaries. Being the first to join us on the banks of the Green river, he merited the title of precursor of the Flat Heads. His bravery and zeal had four times induced him to travel, for our sakes, over a space of 400 miles, which separated us from the great camp.

Such were they who now greeted us. Let them tell their own story.

They had prayed daily to obtain for me a happy journey and a speedy return. Their brethren continued in the same good disposition; almost all, even children and old men, knew by heart the prayers which I had taught them the preceding year. Twice on every week day, and three times on each Sunday, the assembled tribe recited prayers in common. Whenever they moved their camp, they carried with them, as an ark of safety, the box of ornaments left in their custody. Five or six children, whom I had baptised went to heaven during my absence; the very morrow of my departure, a young warrior whom I had baptised the day previous, died in consequence of a wound received from the Black Feet about three months before. — Another, who had accompanied me as far as the fort of the Crows, and was as yet but a catechumen,

---

[107] This Indian was known as Francis Saxa, and as late as 1903 was living on his own ranch in Missoula County. See his portrait in Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest*, p. 20.— Ed.

died of sickness in returning to the tribe, but in such happy dispositions that his mother was perfectly consoled for his loss by the conviction [95] that his soul was in heaven. A girl, about twelve years of age, seeing herself on the point of dying, had solicited baptism with such earnestness that she was baptised by Peter the Iroquois, and received the name of Mary. — After having sung a canticle in a stronger voice than usual, she died, saying: "Oh how beautiful! I see Mary, my mother." So many favors from heaven were calculated to instigate the malice of hell. The enemies of salvation had accordingly attempted to sow the cockle among the good grain, by suggesting to the chiefs of the tribe that my conduct would be like that of so many others, who, "once gone, had never returned." But the great chief had invariably replied: "You wrong our father; he is not double-tongued, like so many others. He has said: 'I will return,' and he will return, I am sure." The interpreter added that it was this conviction which had impelled the venerable old man, notwithstanding his advanced age, to place himself at the head of the detachment bound for Green river; that they had arrived at the rendezvous on the 1st of July, which was the appointed day; that they had remained there till the 16th, and would have continued to occupy the same position, had not the scarcity of provisions obliged them to depart. He stated also that the whole tribe had determined to fix upon some spot as a site for a permanent village; that, with this view, they had already chosen two places which they believed to be suitable; that nothing but our presence was required to confirm their determination; and they relied with such implicit confidence on our speedy arrival, that the great chief, on starting from Green river, had left there three men to await us, advising them to hold that position until no longer tenable.

Here, I have much to relate that is not less edifying than serious; but before I enter upon the chapter of noble actions, [96] I must conclude what I had commenced in my preceding letter. But I feel bound, before all, to pay Mr. Ermatinger, the captain of Fort Hall, the tribute of gratitude which we owe him.[108]

Although a protestant by birth, this noble Englishman gave us a most friendly reception. Not only did he repeatedly invite us to his table, and sell us, at first cost, or at one-third of its value, in a country so remote, whatever we required; but he also added, as pure gifts, many articles which he believed would be particularly acceptable. He did more: he promised to recommend us to the good will of the Governor of the honorable English Company, who was already prepossessed in our favor; and, what is still more deserving of praise, he assured us that he would second our ministry among the populous nation of the Snakes, with whom he has frequent intercourse. So much zeal and generosity give him a claim to our esteem and gratitude. May heaven return to him a hundred fold the benefits he has conferred on us. It was at Fort Hall that we took our final leave of the American Colony, with which we had, till then, pursued the same route.[109] It was previously to this, while we were yet at Green river, that those who came to that wild region,

---

[108] Francis Ermatinger, one of the chief factors for the Hudson's Bay Company, came to the Columbia region about 1824; two years later he was in command of Fort Kamloops when Governor Simpson passed that way. In 1828, he appears to have been stationed at Fort Okinagan on the upper Columbia, while Wyeth met him in the Snake River country in 1832-34. He married a niece of Madame McLoughlin, wife of the governor of Vancouver, and held various important stations. In the autumn of the year in which De Smet encountered him, he led the brigade into California as far as Yerba Buena (San Francisco). Upon the establishment of the provincial government in Oregon, he was elected (1845) treasurer. He is thought to have ultimately retired to Canada.— Ed.

[109] For Fort Hall see our volume xxi, p. 210, note 51 (Townsend).— Ed.

merely for information or pleasure, had turned back, with some fewer illusions than when they started out upon the journey. They were five or six in number.[110] Among them was a young Englishman, who had been our mess-mate from St. Louis. In taking leave of us, this young man, who was in many respects estimable, assured us that, if providence should ever again throw us together, the meeting would give him the highest satisfaction, and that he would always be happy to do us all the service in his power. He was of a good English family, and like most of his countrymen, fond of travel: he had [97] already seen the four quarters of the globe; but *qui multum peregrinantur*. . . . He cherished so many prejudices, however, against the Catholic religion, that, despite all our good wishes, we were of no service to him in the most essential relation. We recommended him to our friends. I have treasured up one of his beautiful reflections: "We must travel in the desert to witness the watchful care o Providence over the wants of man."

They who had started, purely with the design of seeking their fortune in California, and were pursuing their enterprise with the constancy which is characteristic of Americans, had left us, but a few days before our arrival at the fort, in the vicinity of the boiling springs which empty into Bear river.[111] There now remained with us but a few of the party, who had come to the fort in order to revictual. Among the latter were the leader of the Colony and a reputed deacon of the Methodist sect.[112]

[110] Bidwell (*Century Magazine*, xix, p. 120) gives the names of three in addition to Romaine, the Englishman — Peyton, Rodgers, and Amos E. Frye. Thirty-two of the California party went on to Fort Hall with the missionaries, while the remainder, among them Bidwell, branched off to the west from Soda Springs.— Ed.

[111] For Bear River and Soda Springs see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, pp. 199, 200, notes 44, 45.— Ed.

[112] According to Bidwell (*op. cit.*, p. 120), these two men were Bartleson, from

Both were of a peaceable disposition, and manifested for us the highest regard; but the former, like so many others, being very indifferent as to religious matters, held as a maxim, "that it was best to have no religion, or else to adopt that of the country in which we live;" and wishing to display his great Bible erudition, he in proof of his paradox, cited as a text of St. Paul the ancient proverb: *Si fueris Romæ, Romano vivite more.* The minister was of the same opinion, but yet he wished some religion, it being well understood that his was the best. I say *his*, because he was neither *a* Methodist, *a* Protestant, nor *a* Catholic — not even a Christian; he maintained that a Jew, a Turk, or an Idolatar may be as agreeable as any other in the sight of God. For the proof of his doctrine, he relied (strange to say) on the authority of St. Paul, and particularly on this text: *Unus Dominus una fides.* In fact, these were the very words with which he [98] greeted us, the first time we saw him, and which formed the subject of a long valedictory discourse that he delivered in one of the meeting houses of Westport, previous to his departure for his western mission. By whom was he sent? We have never ascertained. His zeal frequently induced him to dispute with us; it was not difficult to show him that his ideas, with the exception of one, were vague and fluctuating. He acknowledged it himself; but after having wandered from point to point, he always returned to his favorite tenet, which, according to him, was the fundamental principle of all true belief: "that the love of God is the first of duties, and that to inculcate it we must be tolerant." This was his strongest point of support, the foundation of all his reasoning, and the stimulus of his zeal. The term Catholic, according to him, was but another word

Jackson County, Missouri, and "a Methodist Episcopal preacher, whose name I think was also Williams."— Ed.

for "love and philanthropy." He carried his absurdities and contradictions so far, that he excited the hilarity of the whole camp. His ingenuous simplicity was even greater than his tolerance. For example, he once said to me: "Yesterday one of the members of my persuasion returned to me a book which I had lent him, stating that it contained an exposition of the Roman creed." When I asked him his opinion of it, he replied, "that the book was full of errors;" yet it was an exposition of Methodist principles that I had given him. "Witness," said he, with emphasis, "the blinding influence of prejudice."

I had daily conversations with some one of the caravan, and frequently with several. And although Americans are slow to change their creed, we had the consolation to relieve our travelling companions of a heavy load of prejudice against our holy religion. They parted from us, exhibiting signs of respect and veneration; nay, even of preference for Catholicity. These controversies so completely [99] engrossed my mind, my heart and my senses, that I arrived almost unconsciously on the banks of Snake river. Here a great danger and a profitable lesson awaited us; but before speaking of the adventures of our journey, I shall conclude what remains to be related of the country we traversed.

We halted with our narrative upon the shore of the Sweet-water. This stream is one of the most beautiful tributaries of the Platte. It owes its name, indeed, to the purity of its waters. It is distinguished from its fellow tributaries by the numerous wanderings of its current — a proof that the fall of its bed is but slight. But suddenly changing its course, we see or rather hear it rushing impetuously through a long cleft in a chain of mountains. These mountains, which harmonize well with the torrent, exhibit the most picturesque scenes; travellers have

Devil's Gate

named this spot the Devil's Entrance.[113] In my opinion, they should have rather called it Heaven's Avenue, for if it resembles hell on account of the frightful disorder which frowns around it, it is still a mere passage, and it should rather be compared to the way of heaven on account of the scene to which it leads. Imagine, in short, two rows of rocks, rising perpendicularly to a wonderful height, and, at the foot of these shapeless walls, a winding bed, broken, encumbered with trunks of trees, with rubbish, and with timber of all dimensions; while, in the midst of this chaos of obstacles, the roaring waves force a passage, now rushing with fury, then swelling with majesty, and anon spreading with gentleness, according as they find in their course a wider or more straitened passage. Above these moving and noisy scenes, the eye discerns masses of shadow, here relieved by a glance of day, there deepening in their gloom by the foliage of a cedar or pine, till finally, as the sight travels [100] through the long vista of lofty galleries, it is greeted by a distant perspective of such mild beauty, that a sentiment of placid happiness steals upon the mind. Such is the spectacle we admired at the distance of nine or ten miles from the Rock Independence, on the morning of 6th July. I doubt whether the solitude of the Carthusian monastery, called La Grande Chartreuse, of which so many wonders are related, can, at least at first sight, offer greater attractions to him whom divine grace has called to a contemplative life. As for me, who am not called to such a state, at least exclusively, after an hour of raptures, I began to understand the expression of the Carthusian friar, *pulchrum transeuntibus*; and I hasten to proceed.

[113] This cañon of the Sweetwater is about five miles above Independence Rock. It is a cut about three hundred yards long, and thirty-five wide through a spur of the mountains in Natrona County, Wyoming. See illustration of cañon in Frémont's "Exploring Tour," *Senate Docs.*, 28 Cong., 2 sess., 174, p. 57.— Ed.

Hence we directed our course more and more towards the heights of the Far West, ascending, some times clambering, until we reached the summit, from which we discovered another world.[114] On the 7th of July we were in sight of the immense Oregon Territory. I will not presume to add to the many pompous descriptions which have been given of the spectacle now before us. I shall say nothing either of the height, the number, or the variety of those peaks, covered with eternal snows, which rear their heads, with menacing aspect, to the heavens. Nor will I speak of the many streams descending from them and changing their course, with unexpected suddenness; nor of the extreme rarification of the air with the consequent effect upon objects susceptible of contraction, at so great an elevation. All this is common; but to the glory of the Lord, I must commemorate the imperious necessity I experienced, of tracing his holy name upon a rock, which towered pre-eminent amid the grandeur around. May that ever adorable name be to travellers a monument of our gratitude, and a pledge of salvation. Henceforth we descended [101] towards the Pacific — first, by following, then by crossing the Little and the Great Sandy Rivers.[115] In the vicinity of the latter, as the Captain had mistaken one road for another, the caravan wandered for three days at random. I, myself, on a fine evening, strayed from the rest. I thought myself entirely lost; how was

[114] The ascent of the South Pass is so gradual that without instruments it is difficult to know when one attains the summit. See Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 58, note 37.— Ed.

[115] For Little and Big Sandy, see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 187, note 36. The former was the beginning of Sublette's Cut Off, sometimes called the "Dry Drive," because of scarcity of water on the route. This crossed directly to Bear River, without passing southward by Fort Bridger. Such would seem to have been the route taken by De Smet's company. The regular trail went down the Big Sandy, forded Green River near its forks, and proceeded across to the site of Fort Bridger, founded two years later.— Ed.

I to act? I did what every sincere believer would have done in the same circumstances, I prayed; and then urging on my horse, I travelled several miles, when it struck me that it would be prudent to retrace my steps. I did so instantly, and it was fortunate, for the caravan was far behind. I found it encamped; still ignorant however of its position, and on a soil so arid that our jaded beasts were necessitated to fast for the night. Days follow, but resemble not each other; two days subsequently, we were surrounded with abundance, filled with joy, all once more united, and on the banks of a river not less celebrated among the hunters of the west, than the shores of the Platte. This river loses itself not far below, in clefts of rocks said to be no less than two hundred miles in extent, among which there are countless swarms of beavers, although the trapper has never ventured to hunt them, on account of the extreme peril of the enterprise. At a certain period of the year, both trappers and Indians flock to this spot, for the purpose of bartering all kinds of merchandise. It was here, but eight years ago, the wagons that first undertook to cross the Rocky Mountains,[116] found the Pillars of Hercules, and it was here too that we found the messenger of the Flat Heads, to whom I have already alluded. This river is the Rio Colorado of the West.[117] . . . We rested two days upon its banks, with the company of Captain F., who had just returned from California.[118] What they told

[116] Captain Bonneville's expedition of 1832 was the first to cross the Green River in wagons. See Irving, *Rocky Mountains*, chapter ii.— Ed.

[117] They were in reality upon Green River, a tributary of the Colorado. See Wyeth's *Oregon*, in our volume xxi, p. 60, note 38.— Ed.

[118] Captain Henry Fraeb (Frapp), who was one of the partners of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company (1830-34). He was well known in the mountain fur-trade, frequently being associated therein with Fitzpatrick, De Smet's guide. According to Bidwell, he was killed the night after leaving this party; Frémont says — *Exploring Expedition*, p. 40 — that this occurred the latter part of August, 1841, in a battle with Sioux and Cheyenne.— Ed.

us concerning that distant country dissipated many illusions, and caused [102] some of our companions, who travelled for amusement, to return.

On the 20th of July we seriously thought of continuing our journey. To a company like ours, it was not an easy matter. The remembrance of the expedition of Bonneville was still fresh in the minds of all; but our object was not the same; we had no articles but such as were necessary.—They could be transported conveniently only by wagons. We placed all our confidence in God. We soon crossed the river, and our equipage was seen coming in all directions, over vallies and mountains. We were compelled to clear a passage, some times in the middle of a ravine, some times on the declivity of a rock, and frequently through bushes. We travelled in this manner for ten days, to reach Bear river, which flows through a wide and beautiful valley, surrounded by lofty mountains and often intersected by inaccessible rocks. We continued our march through it during eight successive days. The river resembles in its course the form of a horse shoe, and falls into the great Salt lake, which has no communication with the sea. On our way, we met several families of Soshonees or Snake Indians, and Soshocos or Uprooters. They speak the same language, and are both friends to the whites. The only difference we could observe between them, was that the latter were by far the poorer.[119] They formed a grotesque group, such as is not to be seen in any other part of the Indian territory. Represent to yourself a band of wretched horses, disproportionate in all their

[119] This tribe is often classified with the Digger Indians, for whom see *ante*, p. 167, note 38; but the latter possessed no horses. The Soshocoes (Shoshocoes) appear to be a band of the Shoshoni proper — closely allied, as De Smet notes, but with less property, and less virile in character. They were the branch of Shoshoni which had their roving habitat along the banks of the Green River; whereas the Shoshoni (or Snake) roved chiefly on Lewis River.— Ed.

Soda Springs

outlines, loaded with bags and boxes to a height equal to their own, and these surmounted by rational beings young and old, male and female, in a variety of figures and costumes, to which the pencil of a Hogarth or a Breugel could scarcely do justice, and you will have an idea of the scene we witnessed. One [103] of these animals, scarcely four feet high, had for its load four large sacks of dried meat, two on each side, above which were tied several other objects, terminating in a kind of platform on the back of the living beast; and, on the summit of the whole construction, at a very high elevation, was seated cross-legged on a bear skin a very old person smoking his calumet. At his side, on another Rosinante,[120] was mounted an old Goody, probably his wife, seated in the same manner on the top of sacks and bags, that contained all sorts of roots, dried beans and fruits, grains and berries; in short, all such comestibles as the barren mountains and the beautiful vallies afford. These they carried to their winter encampment. Some times we have seen a whole family on the same animal, each according to his age, the children in front, the women next, and the men behind. On two occasions I saw thus mounted, five persons, of whom two at least had the appearance of being as able to carry the poor horse as the horse was to support the weight of these two Soshocos gentlemen.

Some places on the Bear river exhibit great natural curiosities. A square plain of a few acres in extent presents an even surface of fuller's earth of pure whiteness, like that of marble, and resembling a field covered with dazzling snow. Situated near this plain are a great many springs, differing in size and temperature. Several of them have a slight taste of soda, and the temperature of these, is cold. The others are of a milk warm tempera-

[120] The name of Don Quixote's steed, a charger all skin and bone.— Ed.

ture, and must be wholesome; perhaps they are not inferior to the celebrated waters of the Spa, or of the lime springs in Belgium. I am inclined to believe so, though I am not firm in the opinion; at all events, they are surrounded by the mountains over which our wagons found it so difficult to pass. I therefore invite neither sick nor sound to test them. In the same [104] locality there is a hole in the ground, out of which air and water escape alternately. The earth for some distance around resounds like an immense vault, and is apt to frighten the solitary traveller as he passes along.[121]

It was here that we left Bear River. On the 14th of August our wagons having proceeded ten hours without intermission, arrived at the outlet of a defile which seemed to us the end of the world. On our right and left were frightful mountains; in our rear a road which we were by no means tempted to retrace; in front a passage through which rushed a torrent; but so small that the torrent itself seemed with difficulty, to force its way.[122] Our beasts of burthen were, for the first time, exhausted. Murmurs arose against the captain, who, however, was imperturbable, and as he never shrunk from difficulties, advanced to reconnoitre the ground.[123] In a few moments he made us a sign to approach; one hour after we had surmounted every obstacle, for we had traversed the highest chain of the Rocky Mountains and were nearly in sight of Fort Hall.

---

[121] For these springs see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 200, note 45.— Ed

[122] This was the route by which the trail crossed from the waters of the Colorado to those of the Lewis, a difficult mountain path in Bannock County, Idaho, approximating the route of the Oregon Short Line Railway.— Ed.

[123] The captain and guide of this expedition was Thomas Fitzpatrick, for whom see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 192, note 40. See De Smet's letter recommending his services, in Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, iv, p 1465.— Ed.

On the evening previous to the departure of the camp from the Soda Springs, I directed my course towards the fort, to make a few necessary arrangements. The young F. Xavier was my only companion. We were soon involved in a labyrinth of mountains, and about midnight, we were on the summit of the highest chain. My poor guide, being able to see nothing through the darkness but frightful precipices, was so pitifully embarrassed that after veering about for a while, like a weather-cock, he confessed himself lost. That was not a place, nor was it a time, to wander at random; I, therefore, took, what I considered, the only alternative, that of waiting for the morning sun to extricate us from our embarrassment. Wrapped up in my blanket and with my saddle for a pillow, I stretched myself upon the rock, and [105] immediately fell into a sound sleep. Early the next morning, we descended by a small cleft in the rocks, which the obscurity of the night had concealed and arrived on a plain watered by the New Port, one of the tributaries of Snake River. We trotted or gallopped over fifty miles in the course of the day. The whole way presented evident remains of volcanic eruptions; piles and veins of lava were visible in all directions, and the rocks bore marks of having been in a state of fusion. The river, in its whole length, exhibits a succession of beaver ponds, emptying into each other by a narrow opening in each dike, thus forming a fall of between three and six feet. All these dikes are of stone, evidently the work of the water and of the same character and substance as the stalactites found in some caverns.[124]

We arrived late in the evening, within half a mile of the

[124] The Portneuf River, for which see our volume xxi, p. 209, note 49 (Townsend). This characteristic of the Portneuf — a series of dams of mineral deposit — make it a beautiful succession of still, dark pools and foaming cascades, and may now be noted from the windows of trains on the Oregon Short Line Railway.— Ed.

Fort, but being unable to see our way in the darkness, and not knowing where we were, we encamped for the night among the bushes, near the margin of a small brook.

I have the honor to be

Rev. Father Provincial,

Your most humble and obedient servant and son,

P. J. De Smet, S.J.

LETTER VI

Camp of the Big-Face, 1st Sept. 1841.

Rev. and Dear Father Provincial:

Nearly four months had elapsed since our departure from Westport, when we met the main body of the nation to which we had been sent. Here we found the principal chiefs, four of whom had advanced a day's journey to welcome us. They met us at one of the sources of the Missouri called Beaver-Head, where we had encamped.[125] Having crossed the small river under the direction of these new guides we came to an extensive plain, at the western part of which the Flat Heads lay encamped. This was on the 30th of August, and it was only towards night that we could distinctly discern the camp. A number of runners who rapidly succeeded each other, informed us that the camp was not far distant. Contentment and joy were depicted on their countenances. Long before the Flat

[125] Beaverhead River is the main branch of the Jefferson, one of the three great sources of the Missouri. It runs through a mountainous valley in a county of the same name, in which is located Dillon, the chief town of southwestern Montana. The valley is named for a rocky point that bears a resemblance to the head of a beaver. Lewis and Clark were the first white men known to have visited this locality. The cliff they called "Beaverhead" is now known as "Point of Rocks," about eighteen miles north of Dillon. See *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, ii, p. 321.— Ed.

Head warrior, who is surnamed the Bravest of the Brave, sent me his finest horse to Fort Hall, having strongly recommended that no one should mount him before he was presented to me. Soon after the warrior himself appeared, distinguished by his superior skill in horsemanship, and by a large red scarf, which he wore after the fashion of the Marshals of France. He is the handsomest Indian warrior of my acquaintance. He came with a numerous retinue. We proceeded at a brisk trot, and were now but two or three miles from the camp, when at a distance we descried a warrior of [107] lofty stature. A number of voices shouted Paul! Paul! and indeed it was Paul, the great chief, who had just arrived after a long absence, as if by special permission of God, to afford him the satisfaction of introducing me personally to his people.[126] After mutual and very cordial demonstrations of friendship, the good old chief insisted upon returning to announce our arrival. In less than half an hour all hearts were united and moved by the same sentiments. The tribe had the appearance of a flock crowding with eagerness around their shepherd. The mothers offered us their little children, and so moving was the scene that we could scarcely refrain from tears. This evening was certainly one of the happiest of our lives. We could truly say that we had reached the peaceful goal. All previous dangers, toils and trials, were at an end and forgotten. The hopeful thought that we would soon behold the happy days of the primitive Christians revive among these Indians, filled our minds, and the main subject of our conversations became the question: "What shall we do to comply with the requisitions of our signal vocation?"

[126] The principal chief of the Flathead tribe was an hereditary officer. This chief, whose Indian name was Tjolzhitsay, the equivalent of Big or Long Face, was the first of the nation to be baptized in 1840. For a further account of his life see letter ix, *post*.— ED.

I engaged Father Point, who is skilled in drawing and architecture, to trace the plan of the Missionary Stations. In my mind, and still more in my heart, the material was essentially connected with the moral and religious plan. Nothing appeared to us more beautiful than the *Narrative of Muratori*.[127] We had made it our Vade Mecum. It is chiefly to these subjects that we shall devote our attention for the future, bidding farewell to all fine perspectives, animals, trees and flowers, or favoring them only with an occasional and hasty glance.

From Fort Hall we ascended the Snake River, also called Lewis' Fork, as far as the mouth of Henry's Fort. This is unquestionably the most barren of all the mountain [108] deserts. It abounds in absynth, cactus, and all such plants and herbs as are chiefly found on arid lands.[128] We had to resort to fishing for the support of life, and our beasts of burden were compelled to fast and pine; for scarcely a mouthful of grass could be found during the

[127] Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750) was by many accounted the foremost scholar and antiquarian of his time. Born near Modena, he was appointed keeper of public archives at that place, and seldom left the city. His chief work was in the classics, publishing *Anecdota Græca* and *Anecdota Latina*, valuable collections of hitherto unedited fragments. Through a fellow-townsman who went as missionary to the Jesuit community in Paraguay, Father Muratori became interested in that land and wrote in Italian *Il Christianesimo Felice nelle Missione dei Padri della Compagnia di Jesu nel Paraguai* (Venice, 1743). He states in the preface that his information was derived from the memoirs of the Jesuits, and from conversations and correspondence with those who had lived in Paraguay. This work was translated into several languages, the English version having been published at London in 1759. Muratori represents the Jesuit community of converted Indians as a veritable earthly paradise. De Smet's reference to this work shows his ambition to establish a Paraguayan régime in the continent of America.— Ed.

[128] With his party, De Smet advanced up the Snake or Lewis River to its forks, of which Henry's is the most northern, rising in Henry's Lake (see *ante*, p. 175, note 45). This arid valley, of which the missionary speaks, has been proved fertile under the influence of irrigation. Several millions of dollars have in recent years been invested in irrigation canals, along the valley of the upper Lewis, through which runs a spur of the Oregon Short Line Railway.— Ed.

eight days which it took us to traverse this wilderness. At a distance we beheld the colossal summits of the Rocky Mountains. The three Tetons were about fifty miles to our right, and to the left we had the three mounds at a distance of thirty miles.[129]

From the mouth of Henry's Fork we steered our course towards the mountains over a sandy plain furrowed by deep ravines, and covered with blocks of granite. We spent a day and night without water. On the following day we came to a small brook, but so arid is this porous soil, that its waters are soon lost in the sand. On the third day of this truly fatiguing journey we entered into a beautiful defile, where the verdure was both pleasing and abundant, as it is watered by a copious rivulet. We gave to this passage the name of "the Father's Defile," and to the rivulet that of St. Francis Xavier.[130] From the Father's Defile, to the place of our destination, the country is well watered, for it abounds with small lakes and rivulets, and is surrounded by mountains, at whose base are found numberless springs. In no part of the world is the water more limpid or pure, for whatever may be the depth of the rivers, the bottom is seen as if there were nothing to intercept the view. The most remarkable spring which we have seen in the mountains, is called the Deer's lodge. It is found on the bank of the main Fork of the Bitter Root or St. Mary's River; to this Fork I have given the name of St. Ignatius.[131] This spring is

[129] For the Three Buttes and Three Tetons see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 209, note 49.— Ed.

[130] The travellers passed by Beaverhead Valley, where the main body of the Flathead met them, by the well-known trace along the Big Hole and across the divide into Deer Lodge Valley — the route now followed substantially by the Oregon Short Line Railway. "Father's Defile" must have been near the Deer Lodge divide.— Ed.

[131] Deer Lodge takes its name from a spring around which many white-tailed deer were wont to assemble. The mineral deposit had piled in a conical heap,

situated on the top of a mound thirty feet high, in the middle of a marsh. It is accessible [109] on one side only. The water bubbles up, and escapes through a number of openings at the base of the mound, the circumference of which appears to be about sixty feet. The waters at the base are of different temperatures: hot, lukewarm and cold, though but a few steps distant from each other. Some are indeed so hot that meat may be boiled in them. We actually tried the experiment.

I remain, Rev. Father Provincial,

Yours, &c.

P. J. De Smet, S.J.

LETTER VII

St. Ignatius' River, 10th Sept. 1841.

Rev. and Dear Father Provincial:

I informed your Reverence that flowers are found in abundance near the rock called the Chimney. Whilst we were there Father Point culled one flower of every kind, and made a fine nosegay in honor of the Sacred heart of Jesus, on the day of the Feast. As we proceeded towards the Black Hills, the flowers diminished in number, but now and then we found some which we had not seen any where. I have taken notice of many of them, for the amusement of amateurs. Among such as are double, the most common and those that are chiefly characterised by the soil on which they grow, are to be found on this side

---

forming the shape of an Indian lodge. These are now called Warm Springs, and used for medicinal purposes. The name Deer Lodge is now applied to the river and its valley, to a Montana county, and to the seat of that county. The valley is fertile. In its lower course the river called Hell Gate united with Bitterroot (or St. Mary's) at Missoula.— Ed.

the Platte River. The rose-colored lupine flourishes in the plain contiguous to the Platte, as far as the Chimney. Beyond it grows a medicinal plant, bearing a yellow flower with five petals, called the prairie epinette; and still farther on, where the soil is extremely barren, are seen three kinds of the prickly-pear; the flowers of these are beautiful, and known among Botanists by the name of *Cactus Americana*. They have already been naturalized in the flower gardens of Europe. The colors of the handsomest roses are less pure and lively than the carnation of this beautiful flower. The exterior of the chalice is adorned with all the shades of red and green. The petals are evasated like those of the lily. It is better [111] adapted than the rose to serve as an emblem of the vain pleasures of this nether world, for the thorns that surround it are more numerous, and it almost touches the ground. Among the Simples, the most elegant is the blue-bell of our gardens, which however, far surpasses it by the beauty of its form, and the nicety of its shades, varying from the white to the deepest azure. Adam's Needle, found only on the most barren elevation, is the finest of all pyramidals. About the middle of its stem, which is generally about three feet high, begins a pyramid of flowers, growing close to each other, highly shaded with red, and diminishing in size as they approach the summit, which terminates in a point. Its foot is protected by a number of hard, oblong, ribbed, and sharp leaves, which have given it the name of Adam's Needle. The root is commonly of the thickness of a man's arm, its color white, and its form resembling that of the carrot. The Indians eat it occasionally and the Mexicans use it to manufacture soap.[132] There are

[132] For a description of this plant see our volume xv, pp. 232, 233. It is allied to the *Yucca filamentosa* of the Southern states, whence its name of "Adam's needle." It is more commonly called silk or bear grass, and its filaments were

many other varieties of flowers some of them very remarkable and rare even in America, which are still without a name even among travellers. To one of the principal, distinguished by having its bronzed leaves disposed in such a manner as to imitate the chapter of a Corinthian column, we have given the name of Corinthian. Another, a kind of straw color, by the form of its stem, and its division into twelve branches, brought to our minds the famous dream of the Patriarch Joseph, and we have called it the Josephine. A third, the handsomest of all the daisies (Reines Marguerites) that I have ever seen, having a yellow disk, with black and red shades, and seven or eight rays, any of which would form a fine flower, has been named by us the Dominical, not only because it appeared like the Lady and Mistress of all the flowers around, but also because we discovered it on Sunday.

[112] SHRUBS. The shrubs that bear fruit are few. The most common are the currant and gooseberry of various sizes and colors, the hawthorn, the rasberry, the wild cherry and the service-berry. Currants, white, red, black and yellow, grow every where along the mountains. The best are found on the plains, where they are exposed to be ripened by the sun. I have classed the wild cherry and the service-berry among shrubs, because they are generally of low growth and do not deserve the name of trees. The service-berry (*cornier*) grows on a real shrub, and is a delicious fruit, called by travellers the mountain pear, though it bears no resemblance to the pear, its size being that of a common cherry. The mountain cherry differs much from the European cherry. The fruit hangs in clusters around the branches, and is smaller than the wild

---

used for weaving by the Indians of the Columbia, whence it became an article of intertribal trade. See *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, index.— ED.

cherry, whilst its taste and color, and the form of the leaves are nearly the same as those of the latter. Cherries and service-berries constitute a great portion of the Indians' food whilst the season lasts, and they are dried by them to serve for food in the winter. I may perhaps mention other fruits, plants and roots, that grow spontaneously in different parts of the Far West, and are used as food by the Indians for want of better sustenance.

Flax is very common in the valleys between the mountains. What must appear singular is that the root of it is so fruitful that it will produce new stems for a number of years — we examined one of them, and found attached to it about 30 stems, which had sprung from it in former years. Hemp is also found, but in very small quantities.

Trees. There are but few species of trees in the regions which we lately passed. Scarcely any forests are found on the banks of rivers, for which I have already assigned a reason. On the plains we find bushes, and now and then [113] the willow, the alder, the wax tree, the cotton tree, or white poplar whose bark is used for horse feed in winter, and the aspen whose leaves are always trembling. Some Canadians have conceived a very superstitious idea of this tree. They say that of its wood the Cross was made on which our Saviour was nailed, and that since the time of the crucifixion, its leaves have not ceased to tremble! The only lofty trees found on the mountains are the pine and the cedar which is either white or red. The latter is chiefly used for furniture, as it is the most resistible wood of the West. There are several species of the pine: the Norwegian, the resinous, the white, and the elastic, so called because the Indians use it to make bows.

So great is the violence of the winds in the vicinity of the Black Hills, that the cotton wood, which is almost

the only tree that grows there, displays the most fantastic shapes. I have seen some whose branches had been so violently twisted that they became incorporated with the trunk, and after this, grew in such strange forms and directions that at a distance it was impossible to distinguish what part of the tree was immediately connected with the roots.

Birds. I shall say but little of the birds. They are various in form, color and size; from the pelican and the swan to the wren and the humming bird. Muratori, speaking of the last, compares him to the nightingale, and is astonished that such shrill and loud sounds should proceed from so small a body. The celebrated author must have been mistaken, unless the humming bird of South America be different from that of the Rocky Mountains. The latter does not sing but makes a humming noise with his wings as he flies from flower to flower.

Reptiles. With respect to reptiles, they have been frequently described, and I mention them only to give thanks [114] to God, by whose Providence we have been delivered from all such as are venomous, chiefly from the rattle snake. Neither men nor beasts belonging to our caravan have suffered from them, though they were so numerous in places that our wagoners killed as many as twelve in one day.

Insects abound in these regions. The ant has often attracted the notice of naturalists. Some have seemed to doubt whether the wheat stored up by this little insect serves for winter provisions or for the construction of its dwelling. No wheat grows in this country. Yet the ant stores up small pebbles of the size and form of grains of wheat, which inclines me to believe that they use both for the construction of their cells. In either case the paternal Providence of God is manifest. They display as

much foresight in providing dwellings that are out of the reach of humidity and inundations, as in laying up food for future wants. It is probable, however, that here they find food of another kind, and this might easily be ascertained. Fleas are not known in the mountains, but there is another sort of vermin nearly allied to it, to which I have alluded in one of my former letters. And what shall I say of musquitoes? I have suffered so much from them, that I cannot leave them unnoticed. In the heart of the prairie they do not trouble the traveller, if he keep aloof from the shade, and walk in the burning sun. But at nightfall they light on him, and hang on him till morning, like leeches sucking his blood. There is no defence against their darts, but to hide under a buffalo skin, or wrap oneself up in some stuff which they cannot pierce, and run the risk of being smothered. — When green or rotten wood can be procured, they may be driven away by smoke, but in such case the traveller himself is smoked, and in spite of all he can do, his eyes are filled with tears. As soon as the smoke ceases, they [115] return to the charge till other wood is provided and thrown on the fire, so that the traveller's sleep is frequently interrupted, which proves very annoying after the fatigue of a troublesome journey. Another species of insects, called brulots, are found by myriads in the desert, and are not less troublesome than the musquito. They are so small that they are scarcely perceptible, and light on any part of the body that is uncovered, penetrating even into the eyes, ears and nostrils. To guard against them, the traveller, even in the warmest weather, wears gloves, ties a handkerchief over his forehead, neck and ears, and smokes a short pipe or a cigar to drive them from his eyes and nostrils. The fire-fly is a harmless insect. When they are seen in great numbers, darting their phosphoric light through the darkness,

it is a sure sign that rain is at hand. The light which they emit is very brilliant, and appears as if it proceeded from wandering meteors. It is a favorite amusement with the Indians to catch these insects, and after rubbing the phosphoric matter over their faces, to walk around the camp, for the purpose of frightening children and exciting mirth.

As our hunters were scarcely ever disappointed in finding game, we have seldom had recourse to fishing; hence our acquaintance with the finny race is rather limited.— On some occasions, when provisions were becoming scarce, the line had to supply the place of the gun. The fish which we generally caught were the mullet, two kinds of trout, and a species of carps. Once, whilst we lay encamped on the banks of Snake river, I caught more than a hundred of these carps in the space of an hour. The anchovy, the sturgeon, and the salmon, abound in the rivers of the Oregon Territory. There are six species of salmon.[133] They come up the rivers towards the end of April, and [116] after spawning, never return; but the young ones go down to the sea in September, and it is supposed that they re-enter the rivers the fourth year after they have left them.

QUADRUPEDS. The Beaver seems to have chosen this country for his own. Every one knows how they work, and what use they make of their teeth and tail. What we were told by the trappers is probably unknown to many.— When they are about constructing a dam, they examine all the trees on the bank, and choose the one that is most bent over the water on the side where they want to erect their fort. If they find no tree of this kind they repair to another place, or patiently wait till a violent wind gives the requisite inclination to some of the trees. Some of the

[133] For the scientific names of these species, see *ibid.*, index.— ED.

Indian tribes believe that the beavers are a degraded race of human beings, whose vices and crimes have induced the Great Spirit to punish them by changing them into their present form; and they think, after the lapse of a number of years, their punishment will cease, and they will be restored to their original shape. They even believe that these animals use a kind of language to communicate their thoughts to each other, to consult, deliberate, pass sentence on delinquents, &c. The Trappers assured us that such beavers as are unwilling to work, are unanimously proscribed, and exiled from the Republic, and that they are obliged to seek some abandoned hole, at a distance from the rest, where they spend the winter in a state of starvation.[134] These are easily caught, but their skin is far inferior to that of the more industrious neighbors, whose foresight and perseverance have procured them abundant provisions, and a shelter against the severity of the winter season. The flesh of the beaver is fat and savory. The feet are deemed the most dainty parts. The tail affords a substitute for butter. The skin is sold for nine or ten dollars' [117] worth of provisions or merchandise, the value of which does not amount to a single silver dollar. For a gill of whiskey, which has not cost the trader more than three or four cents, is sometimes sold for three or four dollars, though the chief virtue which it possesses is to kill the body and soul of the buyer. We need not wonder then when we see that wholesale dealers in this poisonous article realize large fortunes in a very short time, and that the retailers, of whom some received as much as eight hundred dollars per annum, often present a most miserable appearance before the year expires. The Honorable Hud-

[134] Stories of this sort are numerous; the discarded beaver is, however, the victim of disease, being attacked by a parasite. Consult Martin, *Castorologia, or the Canadian Beaver* (London and Montreal, 1892), pp. 159, 168, 233.— Ed.

son Bay Company does not belong to this class of traders. By them the sale of all sorts of liquors is strictly forbidden.

The Otter is an inhabitant of the mountain rivers. His color is dark brown or black. Like the beaver, he is incessantly pursued by the hunters, and the number of both these animals is yearly diminished. Among other amphibious animals we find two species of the frog. One does not differ from the European, but the other offers scarcely any resemblance. It has a tail and horns and is only found on the most arid soil. By some of our travellers it was called the Salamander.[135]

Opossums are common here. They are generally found near marshes and ponds that abound in small crawfish, of which they are extremely fond. To catch them he places himself on the bank, and lets his long hairless tail hang down in the water. The crawfish are allured by the bait, and as soon as they put their claws to it, the opossum throws them up, seizes them sideways between his teeth, and carries them to some distance from the water, where he greedily but cautiously devours his prey.

The Badger inhabits the whole extent of the desert; he is seldom seen, as he retires to his hole at the least approach [118] of danger. Some naturalists refer this animal to the genuine Ursus. Its size is that of the Dormouse; its color silver grey; its paws are short, and its strength prodigious. A Canadian having seized one as he entered the hole, he required the assistance of another man to pull him out.

The Prairie Dog, in shape, color and agility, more resembles the squirrel than the animal from which it has taken its name. They live together in separate lodges, to the number of several thousands. The earth which they throw up to construct their lodges, forms a kind of slope

[135] See our volume xix. p. 328, note 138 (Gregg).— Ed.

which prevents the rain from entering the holes. At the approach of man, this little animal runs into its lodge, uttering a piercing cry, which puts the whole tribe on their guard. After some minutes, the boldest show a part of their heads, as if to spy the enemy, and this is the moment which the hunter chooses to kill them. The Indians informed us that they sometimes issue in a body, apparently to hold a council, and that wisdom presides over their deliberations. They admit to their dwellings the bird of Minerva, the striped squirrel, and the rattlesnake, and it is impossible to determine what is the cause of this wonderful sympathy. It is said too that they live only on the dew of the grass root, a remark founded upon the position of their village, which is always found where the ground is waterless and barren.

The Polecat or Memphitis Americana, is a beautifully speckled animal. When pursued, it raises its tail, and discharges a large quantity of fluid, which nature has intended for its defence. It repeats these discharges in proportion as the pursuer comes near it. So strong is the fœtid odor of this liquid that neither man nor beast can bear it. It happened once that Rev. Father Van Quickenborne[136] [119] saw two of these cats. He took them for young cubs, and pleased with the discovery, he alighted from his horse, and wished to catch them. He approached them cautiously, and was just ready to put his large hat over one of them, when all at once a discharge was made that covered him all over. It was impossible to go

[136] Father Charles Felix Van Quickenborne was a Belgian, born in Ghent in 1788. Coming to America he was made master of novices at Whitemarsh, and in 1823 removed to Florissant, Missouri, being made superior of his order in the West. He was zealous for Indian missions, in 1827-28 visiting in person the Osage; and in 1836 founding the Kickapoo mission. He died at Portage des Sioux, August 17, 1836, having revived the missions of his order to the North American aborigines.— Ed.

near him — all around him was infected. His clothes could no longer be used, and the poor man, though rather late, resolved never again to attempt to catch young bears!

The Cabri (Antelope) resembles the deer in form and size, the antlers are smaller and have but two branches; the color of the animal resembles that of the stag; the eyes are large and piercing; and its gait in the wilderness is a kind of elegant gallop. Sometimes the Antelope stops short and rears his head to observe his pursuer; this is the most favorable moment to kill him. When started or shot at and missed, he darts forward with incredible swiftness, but curiosity induces him to halt and look back. The hunter tries to amuse his curiosity, by holding up and waving some bright colored object: the animal approaches, and curiosity becomes the cause of his death. The flesh is wholesome, and easily digested, but it is used only where deer and buffalo meat are wanting. The Antelope hunt is a favorite sport with the Indians. They choose a spot of ground from fifty to eighty feet square, and enclose it with posts and boughs, leaving a small opening or entrance, two or three feet wide. From this entrance they construct two wings or hedges, which they extend for several miles.— After this they form a large semicircle, and drive the Antelopes before them till they enter between the hedges, where they press so hard upon them that they force them into the square enclosure, in which they kill them with clubs. I have been told that the number of Antelopes thus driven [120] into the enclosure, often amounts to more than two hundred. The meat of the buffalo cow is the most wholesome and the most common in the west. It may be called the *daily bread* of the traveller, for he never loses his relish for it.— It is more easily procured than any other, and it is good throughout.

Though some prefer the tongue, others the hump, or some other favorite piece, all the parts are excellent food. To preserve the meat it is cut in slices, thin enough to be dried in the sun; sometimes a kind of a hash is made of it, and this is mixed with the marrow taken from the largest bones. This kind of mixture is called Bull or Cheese, and is generally served up and eaten raw, but when boiled or baked it is of more easy digestion, and has a more savory taste to a civilized palate. The form and size of the buffalo are sufficiently known. It is a gregarious animal, and is seldom seen alone. Several hundreds herd together, the males on one side, the females on the other, except at a certain season of the year. In the month of June we saw an immense herd of them on the Platte.—The chase of this animal is very interesting. The hunters are all mounted; at the signal given, they fall upon the herd, which is soon dispersed; each one chooses his own animal, for he who slays the first is looked upon as the king of the chase — his aim must be sure and mortal, for the animal, when wounded, becomes furious, turns upon his hunter and pursues him in his turn. We once witnessed a scene of this kind. A young American had the imprudence to swim over a river and pursue a wounded buffalo with no other weapon but his knife. The animal turned back upon him, and had it not been for the young Englishman, whom I have already mentioned, his imprudence would have cost him his life. The greatest feat of a hunter is to drive the wounded animal to any place he thinks proper. We had a [121] hunter named John Gray,[137] reputed one of the best marksmen of the mountains; he had frequently

[137] John Gray was an old mountaineer, probably acting on this journey as guide to the Englishman who was out for big game. See an account of a trapper of this name in Alexander Ross, *Fur Hunters of the Far West* (London, 1855), ii, chapter x.—Ed.

given proofs of extraordinary courage and dexterity, especially when on one occasion he dared to attack five bears at once. Wishing to give us another sample of his valor, he drove an enormous buffalo he had wounded, into the midst of the caravan. The animal had stood about fifty shots, and been pierced by more than twenty balls; three times he had fallen, but fury increasing his strength, he had risen, after each fall, and with his horns threatened all who dared to approach him. At last the hunter took a decisive aim, and the buffalo fell to rise no more.

The small chase is carried on without horses. An experienced hunter, though on foot, may attack a whole herd of buffalos; but he must be skilful and cautious. He must approach them against the wind, for fear of starting the game, for so acute is the scent of the buffalo that he smells his enemy at a very considerable distance. Next, he must approach them as much as possible without being seen or suspected. If he cannot avoid being seen, he draws a skin over his head, or a kind of hood, surmounted by a pair of horns, and thus deceives the herd. When within gun shot, he must hide himself behind a bank or any other object. There he waits till he can take sure aim. The report of the gun, and the noise made by the fall of the wounded buffalo, astound, but do not drive away the rest. In the meantime, the hunter re-loads his gun, and shoots again, repeating the manœuvre, till five or six, and sometime more buffalos have fallen, before he finds it necessary to abandon his place of concealment.—The Indians say that the buffalos live together as the bees, under the direction of a queen, and that when the queen is wounded, all the others surround and deplore her. [122] If this were the case, the hunter who had the good fortune to kill the queen, would have fine sport in despatching the rest. After death, the animal is dressed,

that is, he is stripped of his robe, quartered and divided; the best pieces are chosen and carried off by the hunter, who, when the chase has been successful, is sometimes satisfied with the tongue alone. The rest is left for the wolves. These voracious prowlers soon come to the banquet, except when the scene of slaughter is near the camp. In such cases they remain at bay till night, when all is still. Then they come to the charge, and set up such howling that they frighten the inexperienced traveller. But their yells and howlings, however frightful, have little or no effect upon those whose ears have become accustomed to such music. These sleep with as little concern as if there were not a wolf in the country.

Of wolves we have seen four varieties, the grey, the white, the black, and the bluish. The grey seems to be the most common, as they are the most frequently seen.— The black wolves are large and ferocious animals. They sometimes mingle with a herd of buffalos, and at first appear quite harmless, but when they find a young calf strayed from its dam, or an old cow on the brink of a precipice, they are sure to attack and kill the former, and to harass the latter till they succeed in pushing it down the precipice. The wolves are very numerous in these regions — the plains are full of holes, which are generally deep, and into which they retire when hunger does not compel them to prowl about, or when they are pursued by the huntsman. There is a small sized wolf, called the medicine wolf, regarded by the Indians as a sort of Manitou. They watch its yelpings during the night, and the superstitious conjurers pretend to understand and [123] interpret them. According to the loudness, frequency, and other modifications of these yelpings, they interpret that either friends or foes approach the camp, &c., and if it happens that on some other occasion they conjecture

right, the prediction is never forgotten, and the conjurers take care to mention it on every emergency.

There are also four kinds of bears, distinguished by the colors: white, black, brown and grey. The white and grey bears are what the lion is in Asia, the kings of the mountains: they are scarcely inferior to the lion in form and courage. I have sometimes joined in the chase of this animal, but I was in good company — safe from danger. — Four Indian hunters ran around the bear and stunned him with their cries — they soon despatched him. In less than a quarter of an hour after this, another fell beneath their blows. This chase is perhaps the most dangerous; for the bear, when wounded, becomes furious, and unless he be disabled, as was the case in the two instances mentioned, he attacks and not unfrequently kills his pursuers. Messrs. Lewis and Clarke, in their expedition to the sources of the Missouri, adduce a striking proof of the physical strength of this animal, which shows that he is a most formidable enemy. One evening, the men who were in the hindmost canoe, discovered a bear, crouched in the prairie, at a distance of about three hundred yards from the river. Six of them, all skilful hunters, left the canoe, and advanced to attack him. Protected by a little eminence, they approached without being perceived, till they were but forty steps from the animal. Four of the men discharged their guns, and each one lodged a ball in his body — two of the balls had pierced the lungs. The bear, frantic with rage, starts up and rushes upon his enemies, with wide extended jaws. As he approached, the two hunters who had kept [124] their fire, inflicted two wounds on him; one of the balls broke his shoulder, which for a few moments retarded his progress, but before they could re-load their guns, he was so close upon them that they had to run with the greatest speed to the river. Here he

was at the point of seizing them — two of the men threw themselves into the canoe, the four others scattered and hid themselves among the willows, where they loaded and fired with the greatest expedition. They wounded him several times, which only served to increase his fury; at last he pursued two of them so closely, that they were compelled to provide for their safety by leaping into the river from a perpendicular bank nearly twenty feet high. The bear followed them, and was but a few feet from them, when one of the hunters who had come from his lurking place, sent a ball through his head and killed him. They dragged him to the shore, and there ascertained that not less than eight balls passed through his body.[138]

I remain, Rev. and dear Father Provincial,

Yours, &c.

P. J. De Smet, S.J.

LETTER VIII

Hell Gate,[139] 21st Sept. 1841.

Rev. and Dear Father Provincial:

It is on a journey through the desert that we see how attentive Providence is to the wants of man. I repeat with pleasure this remark of my young Protestant friend, because the truth of it appears through the narrative which

[138] It is now accepted that there are but two species of bears in the United States; the black (*Ursus americanus*), of which the cinnamon bear is a variety, and the grizzly (*Ursus horribilis*), known as the white, grey, and brown bear. The episode here related by De Smet may be found in *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, ii, pp. 33, 34.— Ed.

[139] Hell Gate is the defile just east of Missoula, Montana, on a river of that name. It is said to have acquired its name (French, *porte d'enfer*) because the Blackfeet so often lay in wait along its cliffs, and to pass through was as dangerous as entering hell. In the early days of the territory there was a settlement known as Hell Gate, about five miles up the river, from its mouth.— Ed.

I have commenced, and will appear still more evidently in what is to follow. Were I to speak of rivers, the account would be long and tedious, for in five days we crossed as many as eighteen, and crossed one of them five times in the space of a few hours. I shall only mention the most dangerous among them. The first, which we found it very difficult to cross, was the South Fork of the Platte. But as we had been long apprised of the difficulty, we took our precautions before hand, and some of our Canadians had explored it with so much care, that we forded it, not without great difficulty, but without any serious accident. The greatest distress was felt by the dogs of the caravan. Left on the bank, when all had crossed, nothing but fidelity towards their masters could have induced them to swim over a river but little less than a mile wide, and having so rapid a current that it would have carried away wagons and carts, had they not been supported on all sides, while the mules exerted all their strength to pull them onward. The poor dogs did not attempt to cross till they found that there was no medium left between encountering the danger and [126] losing their masters. The passage over these rivers is generally effected by means of a bull boat, the name given to a kind of boat, constructed on the spot with buffalo hides. They are indispensable when the current is impetuous, and no ford can be found. Thanks to our Canadians, we wanted them neither on this nor any other occasion.[140]

The second difficult passage was over the North Fork, which is less wide, but deeper and more rapid than the Southern. We had crossed the latter in carts. Having mustered a little more courage, we determined to cross the North Fork on horseback. We were induced to do

[140] For a further description of these bull-boats see our volume xxiii, p. 279, note 246.— Ed.

Fording the river Platte

so, on seeing our hunter drive before him a horse on which his wife was mounted, whilst at the same time he was pulling a colt that carried a little girl but one year old. To hold back under such circumstances would have been a disgrace for Indian Missionaries. We therefore resolved to go forward. It is said that we were observed to grow pale, and I am inclined to believe we did; yet, after our horses had for some time battled against the current, we reached the opposite shore in safety, though our clothes were dripping wet. Here we witnessed a scene, which, had it been less serious, might have excited laughter. The largest wagon was carried off by the force of the current, in spite of all the efforts, shouts and cries of the men, who did all they could to keep themselves from being drowned. Another wagon was literally turned over. One of the mules showed only his four feet on the surface of the water, and the others went adrift entangled in the gears. On one side appeared the American captain, with extended arms, crying for help. On the other, a young German traveller was seen diving with his beast, and soon after both appearing above water at a distance from each other. Here a horse reached the shore without a rider; further on, two [127] riders appeared on the same horse; finally, the good brother Joseph dancing up and down with his horse, and Father Mengarini clinging to the neck of his, and looking as if he formed an indivisible part of the animal. After all our difficulties, we found that only one of the mules was drowned. As the mule belonged to a man who had been the foremost in endeavoring to save both men and horses, the members of the caravan agreed to make him a present of a horse, as a reward for his services. We offered thanks to God for our escape from danger. I mentioned before that great dangers awaited us on Snake river. This stream being much less deep and wide than

the other two, and having such limpid waters that the bottom can every where be seen, could only be dangerous to incautious persons. It sufficed to keep our eyes open, for any obstacle could easily be distinguished and avoided. But whether it were owing to want of thought or attention, or to the stubborn disposition of the team, Brother Charles Huet found himself all at once on the border of a deep precipice, too far advanced to return. Down went mules, driver and vehicle, and so deep was the place, that there scarcely appeared any chance to save them. Our hunter, at the risk of his life, threw himself into the river, to dive after the poor brother, whom he had to pull out of the carriage. All the Flat Heads who were with us, tried to save the vehicle, the mules and the baggage. The baggage, with the exception of a few articles, was saved; the carriage was raised by the united efforts of all the Indians, and set afloat; but after this operation it was held by but one of them, he found that his strength was inadequate to the task, and crying that he was being drowned, let go his hold. The hunter plunged in after him, and was himself at the point of losing his life, on account of the efforts [128] which the Indian made to save his own. Finally, after prodigies of valor, exhibited by all the Flat Heads, men, women and children, who all strove to give us a proof of their attachment, we lost what we considered the most safe, the team of the carriage. The gears had been cut to enable the mules to reach the shore, but it is said that these animals always perish when once they have had their ears under water. Thus we lost our three finest mules. This loss was to us very considerable, and would have been irreparable, had it not been for the kindness of Captain Ermatinger. Whilst the people of the caravan were drying our baggage, I returned to the Fort, where the generous Captain repaired our loss

Sheyenne Warriors

for a sum truly inconsiderable, when compared with what must be paid on such occasions to those who wish to avail themselves of the misfortunes of others. We had escaped the danger, and were besides taught a very useful lesson, for it was remarked that it was the first day since we began our journey, on which, by reason of the bustle occasioned by our departure from the Fort, we had omitted to say the prayers of the itinerary.

We had dangers of another description to encounter, from which we were also delivered by the aid of God's grace. Once as we travelled along the banks of the Platte, several members of the caravan separated from the main body, contrary to the expressed orders of the Captain, who, together with Father Point and myself, had started a little ahead to look out for a place of encampment. We succeeded in finding a proper site, and we had already unsaddled our horses, when all at once we heard the alarm cry: *the Indians! the Indians!* And in fact, a body of Indians, appearing much larger than it really was, was seen in the distance, first assembling together, and then coming full [129] gallop towards our camp. In the mean time a young American, unhorsed and unarmed, makes his appearance, complaining of the loss he had sustained, and indignant at the blows he had received. He seizes the loaded rifle of one of his friends, and rushes forward to take signal vengeance on the offender. The whole camp is roused; the American youth is determined to fight; the Colonel orders the wagons to be drawn up in double file, and places between them whatever may be exposed to plunder. All preparations are made for a regular defence. On the other hand, the Indian squadron, much increased, advances and presents a formidable front. They manœuvre as if they intend to hem in our phalanx, but at sight of our firm

position, and of the assurance of the Captain who advanced towards them, they checked their march, finally halted, and came to a parley, of which the result was that they should return to the American whatever they had taken from him, but that the blows which he had received should not be returned. After this, both parties united in smoking the calumet. This band consisted of 80 Sheyenne warriors, armed for battle. The Sheyennes are looked upon as the bravest Indians in the prairie. They followed our camp for two or three days. As the chiefs were admitted to our meals, both parties separated with mutual satisfaction.[141]

On another occasion we were in company with the vanguard of the Flat Heads, and had penetrated into an impassible defile between the mountains, so that after having travelled the whole day, we were forced to retrace our steps. At night the rumor was spread that a party of Banac Indians lay encamped in the neighborhood.[142] The Banacs had this very year killed several white men; but it soon appeared that they were more frightened than ourselves, for before day break they had removed from the place.

[130] Without being aware of it, we had escaped a much greater danger on the banks of Green River. We did not know the particulars of this danger till after we had arrived at Fort Hall. There we heard that almost immediately after our separation from the travellers who were on their way to California, and with whom we had till

---

[141] Compare Bidwell's account in *Century Magazine*, xix, p. 116. According to his report, it was a war party of but forty well-mounted Cheyenne. The young American had been unduly excited by their appearance, and was thereafter known as Cheyenne Dawson. His baptismal name was James. Reaching California with the Bidwell party, he was later drowned in Columbia River.— Ed.

[142] For the Bannock Indians see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 192, note 41.— Ed.

then lived as brothers, they divided themselves into two bands, and each band again subdivided into two parties, one to attend to the chase, the other to guard the horses. The hunter's camp was guarded only by five or six men and some women, who had also to keep watch over the horses and baggage of the others. A booty so rich and so much exposed could not but tempt the Indians who roamed in the neighborhood, and waited, as is their custom, till a seasonable opportunity should offer to commence the attack. When least expected, they fell first upon the horses, and then upon the tents, and though the guardians made a courageous defence, and sold their lives dearly, yet they burned and pillaged the camp, taking away whatever might be serviceable to them; thus giving a terrible lesson to such as expose themselves to lose all, by not remaining united to withstand the common enemy.[143]

But a few days after we had received this sad intelligence we ourselves were much alarmed. We apprehended lest we should have to defend our lives against a large body of Black Feet Indians, whose warriors continually infest the country through which we were then travelling. It was reported that they were behind the mountain, and soon [131] after that they were in sight. But our brave Indians, glowing with the desire to introduce us to their tribe, were undaunted, and would have attacked them, had they been a hundred times more numerous. Pilchimo, brandishing his musket in the air, started off with the greatest rapidity, and was followed by three or four others. They crossed the mountain and

[143] The massacre of these travellers gave rise to several vague reports. As we had started together it was supposed by many that we had not yet separated when this unfortunate accident took place. Hence it was circulated in the United States, and even in some parts of Europe, that the Catholic Missionaries had all been killed by the Indians.— DE SMET.

disappeared, and the whole camp made ready to repel the assailants. The horses were hitched and the men under arms, when we saw our brave Indians return over the mountain, followed by a dozen others. The latter were Banacs, who had united rather with a mind to fly than to attack us. Among them was a chief, who showed the most favorable dispositions. I had a long conference with him on the subject of religion, and he promised that he would use all his endeavors to engage his men to adopt religious sentiments. Both he and his retinue left us the day after the arrival of the Flat Heads, who came to wish us joy for the happy issue of our long journey. We here remarked how the power of reason acts upon the heart of the savage. The Banac chief was brother to an Indian of the tribe who had been killed by one of the Flat Head chiefs present on this occasion. They saluted each other in our presence and separated as truly Christian warriors would have done, who show enmity to each other only on the field of battle. Yet as the Flat Heads had more than once, been basely betrayed by the Banacs, the former did not offer to smoke the calumet. I hope that we shall have no difficulty to bring on a reconciliation. The Flat Heads will undoubtedly follow the advice we shall give them, and I feel confident that the Banacs will be satisfied with the conditions.

I have the honor to be

Rev. and dear Father Provincial,

Your devoted servant and son,

P. J. De Smet, S.J.

LETTER IX

St. Mary's, 18th October, 1841.

Rev. and Dear Father:

After a journey of four months and a half on horseback through the desert, and in spite of our actual want of bread, wine, sugar, fruit, and all such things as are called the conveniences of life, we find our strength and courage increased, and are better prepared than ever to work at the conversion of the souls that Providence entrusts to our care. Next to the Author of all good things, we returned thanks to her whom the church reveres as the Mother of her Divine Spouse, since it has pleased the Divine goodness to send us the greatest consolations on several days consecrated to her honor. On the feast of her glorious Assumption we met the vanguard of our dear neophytes. On the Sunday within the Octave, we, for the first time since my return, celebrated the Holy Mysteries among them. On the following Sunday our good Indians placed themselves and their children under the Immaculate Heart of Mary, of which we then celebrated the feast. This act of devotion was renewed by the great chief in the name of his whole tribe, on the feast of her Holy Name. On the 24th of September, the feast of our Lady of Mercy, we arrived at the river called Bitter Root, on the banks of which we have chosen the site for our principal missionary station.[144] On the first Sunday of

[144] The Bitterroot River rises in two forks in the main chain of the Rockies, on the northern slope of the divide between Montana and Idaho, and flows almost directly north through a beautiful, fertile valley, until at Fort Missoula it unites with the Hell Gate to form Missoula River. The name is derived from the plant *Lewisia rediviva* (French, *racine amère*), which was occasionally used by the Indians as food. The name St. Mary's River, assigned by Father de Smet, is frequently found on early maps.— Ed.

October, feast of the Rosary, we took possession of the promised land, by planting a cross on the spot which [133] we had chosen for our first residence. What motives of encouragement does not the Gospel of the present Sunday add to all these mentioned before. To-day too we celebrate the Divine Maternity, and what may we not expect from the Virgin Mother who brought forth her Son for the salvation of the world. On the feast of her Patronage we shall offer by her mediation to her Divine Son, twenty-five young Indians, who are to be baptized on that day. So many favors have induced us unanimously to proclaim Mary the protectress of our mission, and give her name to our new residence.[145]

These remarks may appear silly to such as attribute every thing to chance or necessity, but to such as believe in the wise dispensations of the Providence of God, by which all things are governed and directed, all these circumstances, together with the wonderful manner in which we have been called, sent and led to this new mission; and still more the good dispositions manifested by the Indians, will appear very proper motives to inspire us with fresh courage, and with the hope of establishing here, on a small scale, the order and regularity which once distinguished our missions in Paraguay. This hope is not founded on imagination, for whilst I am writing these lines, I hear the joyful voices of the carpenters, re-echoing to the blows on the smith's anvil, and I see them engaged in raising the *house of prayer*. Besides, three Indians, belonging to the tribe called Pointed Hearts,[146]

[145] The site of St. Mary's mission was on the east bank of the Bitterroot, about eighteen miles above its mouth, near old Fort Owen and the modern Stevensville. For the further history of St. Mary's mission see Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest*, pp. 32-67.— Ed.

[146] The Cœur d'Alène (awl-hearted) Indians are a branch of the Salishan family, whose tribal name is Skitswish (Lewis and Clark, Skeetsomish). Many

having been informed of our arrival among the Flat Heads, have just come to entreat us to have pity on them. "Father," said one of them to me, "we are truly deserving your pity. We wish to serve the Great Spirit, but we know not how. We want some one to teach us. For this reason we make application to you." O had some of my brethren, now so far distant from us, been present here last Sunday, when towards night we raised the [134] august sign of salvation, the standard of the cross, in this small but zealous tribe; how their hearts would have been moved on seeing the pious joy of these children of the forest! What sentiments of faith and love did they exhibit on this occasion, when headed by their chief, they came to kiss the foot of the cross, and then prostrate on their knees, made a sacred promise, rather to suffer death a thousand times, than to forsake the religion of Jesus Christ! Who knows how many of this chosen band may be destined to become apostles and martyrs of our holy religion! Were we more numerous, I feel confident that many other tribes would become members of the kingdom of God; perhaps more than two hundred thousand might be converted to Christ.[147] The Flat Heads and the Pointed Hearts, it is true are not numerous tribes, but they are surrounded by many others who evince the best dispositions. The Ponderas or Pends-d'oreilles are very numerous, and live at a distance of four or five days jour-

---

unauthenticated traditions are afloat in regard to the origin of this term, which seems to be allied to some form of parsimony. The habitat of this tribe, near the lake of that name in northern Idaho, is still the seat of their reservation, which was set off in 1867, but not occupied until after the treaty of 1873. The tribal population has been almost stationary since first known, numbering nearly five hundred. Their language is quite similar to the Spokan. The Cœur d'Alène are agriculturists, wear civilized dress, and are now receiving their lands by allotment.— Ed.

[147] This was the estimated number of Indians under Jesuit control in Paraguay, at the time of greatest prosperity.— Ed.

ney from our present establishment. The chief who governed them last year and who has been baptized and called Peter, is a true apostle.[148] In my first visit to them I baptized two hundred and fifty of their children. Many other tribes have the same origin, and though differing in name, their languages are nearly allied. Next to these are found the Spokans,[149] who would soon follow the example of the neighboring tribes; the Pierced Noses, who are disgusted at the conduct of the Protestant ministers that have settled among them; the Snakes, the Crows and the Banacs whose chief we have seen. Last year I visited the Sheyennes, whom I twice met on the banks of the Platte; the numerous nation of the Scioux, and the three allied tribes called Mandans, Arickarees and Minatarees, who all have given me so many proofs of respect and friendship; the Omahas, with whom I have had so many conferences on [135] the subject of religion, and many others who seem inclined to embrace the truth.

The Black Feet are the only Indians of whose salvation we would have reason to despair, if the ways of God were the same as those of man, for they are murderers, thieves, traitors, and all that is wicked. But were not the Chiquitos, the Chiriquans,[150] the Hurons, and the Iroquois equally wicked before their conversion, which required much time and great help from above? And is it not to the last, that, under God, the Flat Heads owe their desire of becoming members of his church, and the first germs of the copious fruit that has been produced among them?

[148] This Pend d'Oreille's native name was Chalax, and he is said to have been before his baptism a famous medicine man.— Ed.

[149] For the Spokan see Franchère's *Narrative*, in our volume vi, p. 341, note 146.— Ed.

[150] Two South American tribes of eastern Bolivia, who long resisted the Spaniards, but yielded finally to Jesuit missionaries. The mission to the Chiquito was begun in 1691; they were gathered into two villages, and easily civilized.— Ed.

What is more, the Black Feet are not hostile to Black Gowns. We have been assured by other Indians that we would have nothing to fear, if we presented ourselves amongst them as ministers of religion. When last year I fell into the hands of one of their divisions, and it was ascertained that I was an interpreter of the Great Spirit, they carried me in triumph on a buffalo robe to their village, and invited me to a banquet, at which all the great men of the tribe assisted. It was on this occasion, that, whilst I said grace, I was astonished to see that they struck the earth with one hand and raised the other towards heaven, to signify that the earth produces nothing but evil, whilst all that is good comes from above. From all this you will easily conclude that the harvest is great, whilst the laborers are few.

It is the opinion of the Missionaries who accompany me, and of the travellers I have seen in the Far West, in short, of all those who have become acquainted with the Flat Heads, that they are characterised by the greatest simplicity, docility and uprightness. Yet, to the simplicity of children is joined the courage of heroes. They never begin the attack, but wo to such as provoke them or treat [136] them unjustly. A handful of their warriors will not shrink from an enemy twenty times more numerous than they; they will stand and repel the assault, and at last put them to flight, and make them repent their rashness. Not long before my first arrival among them, seventy men of the tribe, finding themselves forced to come to an engagement with a thousand Black Feet warriors, determined to sustain the attack, and rather to die than retreat. Before the engagement they prostrated themselves and addressed such prayers as they had learned to the Great Spirit. They rose full of courage, sustained the first shock, and soon rendered the victory doubtful.

The fight, with several interruptions, was continued five successive days, till at last the Black Feet, astounded at the boldness of their antagonists, were panic struck, and retreated from the scene of action, leaving many killed and wounded on the field of battle, whilst not one warrior of the Flat Heads was killed. But one died of the wounds he had received, and his death happened several months after the engagement, on the day succeeding his baptism— (though the point of an arrow had pierced his skull.) It was on the same occasion that Pilchimo, whom I have already mentioned, gave remarkable proofs of valor and attachment to his fellow warriors. All the horses were on the point of falling into the enemy's hand. Pilchimo was on foot. Not far off was a squaw on horseback; to see the danger, to take the squaw from her horse and mount it himself, to gallop to the other horses, and bring them together, and drive them into the camp, was the affair of a few minutes. Another warrior, named Sechelmeld, saw a Black Foot separated from his company, and armed with a musket.[151] The Black Foot, taking the warrior for one of his own tribe, asked the Flat Head to let him mount behind him. The latter wishing to [137] make himself master of the musket, agreed to the proposal. They advance on the plain, till Sechelmeld seeing that the place favored his design, seizes his fellow rider's weapon, exclaiming; "Black Foot! I am a Flat Head, let go your musket." He wrests it from his hands, despatches him, remounts the horse, and gallops off in pursuit of the enemy.

The following feat equally deserves to be recorded: A Black Foot warrior was taken and wounded whilst in the act of stealing a horse. The night was dark and the wound had rendered him furious. He held his loaded gun, and

[151] Baptized as Ambrose, and one of the most faithful converts. He was living in 1859. See Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, index.— Ed.

threatened death to any one that should approach him. Peter, one of the chiefs already mentioned, though diminutive in size, and far advanced in years, felt his courage revived; he runs up to the enemy, and with one blow fells him to the ground. This done he throws himself on his knees, and raising his eyes towards heaven, he is reported to have said: "Great Spirit! thou knowest that I did not kill this Black Foot from a desire of revenge, but because I was forced to it; be merciful to him in the other world. I forgive him from the bottom of my heart all the evils which he has wished to inflict upon us, and to prove the sincerity of my words I will cover him with my garments." This Peter was baptized last year, and became the apostle of his tribe. Even before baptism, his simplicity and sincerity prompted him to give this testimony of himself: "If ever I have done evil it was through ignorance, for I have always done what I considered good." It would be tedious to give an account of his zealous endeavors. Every morning, at an early hour, he rides through the whole village, stops at every hut, speaks a few words of encouragement and reproof, as circumstances require, and exhorts all to be faithful in the performance of their religious and social duties.

[138] I have spoken of the simplicity and the courage of the Flat Heads; I shall make some other remarks concerning their character. They little resemble the majority of the Indians, who are, generally speaking, uncouth, importunate, improvident, insolent, stubborn and cruel.—The Flat Heads are disinterested, generous, devoted to their brethren and friends; irreproachable, and even exemplary, as regards probity and morality. Among them, dissensions, quarrels, injuries and enmities are unknown. During my stay in the tribe last year, I have never remarked any thing that was contrary to modesty

and decorum in the manners and conversation of the men and women. It is true that the children, whilst very young, are entirely without covering, but this is a general custom among the Indians, and seems to have no bad effect upon them; we are determined, however, to abolish this custom as soon as we shall be able to do it. With respect to religion, the Flat Heads are distinguished by the firmness of their faith, and the ardor of their zeal. Not a vestige of their former superstitions can be discovered. Their confidence in us is unlimited. They believe without any difficulty the most profound mysteries of our holy religion, as soon as they are proposed to them, and they do not even suspect that we might be deceived, or even could wish to deceive them. I have already mentioned what exertions they have made to obtain Black-gowns for their tribe; the journeys, undertakings, the dangers incurred, the misfortunes suffered to attain their object. Their conduct during my absence from them has been truly regular and edifying. They attend divine service with the greatest punctuality, and pay the most serious attention to the explanation of the Catechism. What modesty and fervent piety do they not exhibit in [139] their prayers, and with what humble simplicity they speak of their former blindness, and of such things as tend to reflect honor upon their present conduct. On this last subject their simplicity is truly admirable: "Father," some will say, with down cast eyes, "what I tell you now I have never mentioned to any one, nor shall I ever mention it to others; and if I speak of it to you, it is because you wish and have a right to know it."

The chiefs, who might be more properly called the fathers of the tribe, having only to express their will, and are obeyed, are always listened to, and are not less remarkable for their docility in our regard than for the ascendancy

they possess over their people. The most influential among them, surnamed "The Little Chief," from the smallness of his stature, whether considered as a christian or a warrior, might stand a comparison with the most renowned character of ancient chivalry.[152] On one occasion, he sustained the assaults of a whole village, which, contrary to all justice, attacked his people. On another occasion, when the Banacs had been guilty of the blackest treason, he marched against them with a party of warriors not one-tenth the number of their aggressors. But, under such a leader, his little band believed themselves invincible, and invoking the protection of heaven, rushed upon the enemy, and took signal vengeance of the traitors, killing nine of their number. More would have been killed, had not the voice of Little Chief arrested them in the very heat of the pursuit, announcing that it was the Sabbath, and the hour of prayer. Upon this signal, they gave over the pursuit, and returned to their camp. Arrived there, they immediately, without thinking of dressing their wounds, fell upon their knees in the dust, to render to the Lord of Hosts the honor of the victory. Little Chief had received a ball [140] through the right hand, which had entirely deprived him of its use; but seeing two of his comrades more severely wounded than himself, he with his other hand rendered them every succor in his power, remaining the whole night in attendance upon them. On several other occasions, he acted with equal courage, prudence and humanity, so that his reputation became widely spread. The Nez-perces, a nation far more numerous than the Flat Heads, came to offer him the dignity of being their Great Chief. He might have accepted it without detriment to the rights of any one, as every Indian is free to leave his chief, and place him-

[152] Another title for Michael, or Insula; see *ante*, p. 147, note 13.— Ed.

self under any other head he may think proper, and, of course, to accept any higher grade that may be offered to him. But Little Chief, content with the post assigned him by Providence, refused the offer, however honorable to him, with this simple remark, "By the will of the Great Master of life I was born among the Flat Heads, and if such be His will, among the Flat Heads I am determined to die;"— a patriotic feeling, highly honorable to him. As a warrior, still more honorable to his character are the mildness and humility manifested by him. He said to me, once: "Till we came to know the true God, alas, how blinded were we! We prayed, it is true — but to whom did we address our prayers? In truth, I know not how the Great Spirit could have borne with us so long." At present his zeal is most exemplary; not content with being the foremost in all the offices at chapel, he is always the first and last at the family prayers, and even before break of day he is heard singing the praises of his Maker. His characteristic trait is mildness; and yet he can assume due firmness, not to say severity of manner, when he sees it necessary to exercise more rigorous discipline. Some days before our arrival, one of the young [141] women had absented herself from prayer, without a sufficient reason. He sent for her, and after reading her a lecture before all the household, enforced his motives for greater attention in future, by a smart application of the cane. And how did the young offender receive the correction? With the most humble and praiseworthy submission.

The Flat Heads are fond of praying. After the regular evening prayer, they will assemble in their tents to pray or sing canticles. These pious exercises will frequently be prolonged till a late hour; and if any wake during the night, they begin to pray. Before making his prayer, the good old Simeon gets up and rakes out the live coals upon

his hearth, and when his prayer is done, which is always preceded and followed by the sign of the cross, he smokes his calumet and then turns in again. This he will do three or four times during the night. There was a time, also, when these more watchful spirits of the household, not content with praying themselves, would awaken the sleepers, anxious to make them partakers of the good work. — These pious excesses had sprung from a little piece of advice I had given them on my first visit, that "on waking at night it was commendable to raise the heart to God." It has since been explained to them how they are to understand the advice. This night, between the 25th and 26th, the prayers and canticles have not ceased. Yesterday, a young woman having died who had received baptism four days previously, we recommended them to pray for the repose of her soul. Her remains were deposited at the foot of the Calvary, erected in the midst of the camp. On the cross upon her grave might confidently be inscribed the words: *In spem Resurrectionis* — In hope of a glorious Resurrection. We shall shortly have to celebrate the commemoration [142] of the faithful departed; this will afford us an opportunity of establishing the very christian and standing custom of praying for the dead in their place of interment.

On Sundays, the exercises of devotion are longer and more numerous, and yet they are never fatigued with the pious duty. They feel that the happiness of the little and of the humble is to speak with their Heavenly Father, and that no house presents so many attractions as the house of the Lord. Indeed, so religiously is the Sunday observed here, that on this day of rest, even before our coming, the most timorous deer might wander unmolested in the midst of the tribe, even though they were reduced by want of provisions to the most rigorous fast. For, in

the eyes of this people, to use the bow and arrow on this day, would not have appeared less culpable than did the gathering of wood to the scrupulous fidelity of the people of God.— Since they have conceived a juster idea of the law of grace, they are less slaves to "the letter that killeth;" but still desirous to be faithful to the very letter, they are studious to do their best, and when any doubt arises, they hasten to be enlightened thereon, soliciting in a spirit of faith and humility that permission of which they may think themselves to stand in need.

The principal chief is named "Big Face," on account of the somewhat elongated form of his visage; he might more nobly and more appropriately be named The Nestor of the Desert, for as well in years as in stature and sagacity he has all the essentials of greatness. From his earliest infancy, nay, even before he could know his parents, he had been the child of distress. Being left a helpless orphan, by the death of his mother, with no one to protect him, it was proposed to bury him with her in the same grave — a circumstance that may serve to give some idea of the ignorance and brutality of his tribe. But the Almighty, who had [143] other purposes in his regard, moved the heart of a young woman to compassionate his helpless condition, and offer to become a mother to him. Her humanity was abundantly recompensed by seeing her adopted son distinguished above all his fellows by intelligence, gentleness, and every good disposition. He was grateful, docile, charitable, and naturally so disposed to piety, that, from a want of knowing the true God, he more than once was led to place his trust in that which was but the work of his own hands.— Being one day lost in a forest, and reduced to extremity, he began to embrace the trunk of a fallen tree, and to conjure it to have pity upon him. Nor is it above two months since a serious loss befel him;

indeed one of the most serious that could happen to an Indian — the loss of three calumets at the same time. He spent no time in retracing his steps, and to interest heaven in his favor, he put up the following prayer: "Oh Great Spirit, you who see all things and undo all things, grant, I entreat you, that I may find what I am looking for; and yet let thy will be done." This prayer should have been addressed to God. He did not find the calumets, but in their place he received what was of more incomparable value — simplicity, piety, wisdom, patience, courage, and cool intrepidity in the hour of danger. More favored in one respect than Moses, this new guide of another people to God, after a longer sojournment in the wilderness, was at length successful in introducing his children into the land of promise. He was the first of his tribe who received baptism, and took the name of Paul, and like his patron, the great Apostle, he has labored assiduously to gain over his numerous children to the friendship and love of his Lord and Master.

I remain, Rev. Father Provincial,
Yours, &c.
P. J. De Smet, S.J.

LETTER X

St. Mary's, Rocky Mountains, 26th Oct. 1842.[153]
Rev. and Dear Father Provincial:

This last letter will contain the practical conclusions of what has been stated in the preceding. I am confident that these conclusions will be very agreeable and consoling to all persons who feel interested in the progress of our holy religion, and who very prudently refuse to form

[153] The context proves this to be a misprint for 1841.— Ed.

a decided opinion, unless they can found it on well attested facts.

From what has hitherto been said, we may draw this conclusion, that the nation of the Flat Heads appear to be a chosen people — "the elect of God;" that it would be easy to make this tribe a model for other tribes, — the seed of two hundred thousand christians, who would be as fervent as were the converted Indians of Paraguay; and that the conversion of the former would be effected with more facility than that of the latter. The Flat Heads have no communication with corrupt tribes; they hold all sects in aversion; they have a horror of idolatry; they cherish much sympathy for the whites, but chiefly for the Black Gowns, (Catholic Priests) a name, which, in consequence of the prepossessions and favorable impressions, which they have received from the Iroquois, is synonymous with goodness, learning, and Catholicity. Their position is central.— Their territory sufficiently extensive to contain several missions; the land is fertile, the country surrounded by [145] high mountains. They are independent of all authority except that of God, and those who represent him. They have no tribute to pay but that of prayer; they have already acquired practical experience of the advantages of a civilized over a barbarous state of life; and in fine, they are fully convinced and firmly persuaded that without the religion that is announced to them, they can be happy neither in this world nor in the next.

From all these considerations, we may again draw the conclusions, that the best end which we can propose to ourselves is that which our Fathers of Paraguay had in view when they commenced their missionary labors; and that the means to attain this end should be the same, chiefly because these means have been approved by the

most respectable authorities, crowned with perfect success, and admired even by the enemies of our religion.

The principle being admitted, it only remains to form a correct idea of the method employed by our Fathers in Paraguay to improve the minds and hearts of their Neophytes, and to bring them to that degree of perfection of which they conceived them susceptible. After having seriously reflected on what Muratori relates of the establishments in Paraguay, we have concluded that the following points should be laid down, as rules to direct the conduct of our converts.

1. *With regard to God.*— Simple, firm, and lively faith with respect to all the truths of religion, and chiefly such as are to be believed as Theologians express it, *necessitate medii et necessitate præcepti.* Profound respect for the only true religion; perfect submission to the church of God, in all that regards faith and morality, discipline, &c. Tender and solid piety towards the Blessed Virgin [146] and the Saints. Desire of the conversion of others. Courage and fortitude of the Martyrs.

2. *With regard to our neighbor.*— Respect for those in authority, for parents, the aged, &c. Justice, charity, and generosity towards all.

3. *With regard to one's self.*— Humility, modesty, meekness, discretion, temperance, irreproachable behavior, industry or love of labor, &c.

We shall strenuously recommend the desire of the conversion of others, because Providence seems to have great designs with respect to our small tribe. In one of our instructions given in a little chapel, constructed of boughs, not less than twenty-four nations were represented, including ourselves. Next, the courage and fortitude of the Martyrs, because in the neighborhood of the Black Feet there is continual danger of losing either the life of the soul,

or that of the body. Also, industry or the love of labor, because idleness is the predominant vice of Indians; and even the Flat Heads, if they are not addicted to idleness, at least, manifest a striking inaptitude to manual labor, and it will be absolutely necessary to conquer this.— To ensure success, much time and patience will be required. Finally and chiefly, profound respect for the true religion, to counteract the manœuvres of various sectaries, who, desirous as it would seem, to wipe away the reproach formerly made by Muratori, and in our days by the celebrated Dr. Wiseman,[154] use all their efforts to make proselytes, and to appear disinterested, and even zealous in the propagation of their errors.

4. *With regard to the means.*— Flight from all contaminating influence; not only from the corruption of the age, but from what the gospel calls the world. Caution against [147] all immediate intercourse with the whites, even with the workmen, whom necessity compels us to employ, for though these are not wicked, still they are far from possessing the qualities necessary to serve as models to men who are humble enough to think they are more or less perfect, in proportion as their conduct corresponds with that of the whites. We shall confine them to the knowledge of their own language, erect schools among them, and teach them reading, writing, arithmetic and singing. Should any exception be made to this general rule, it will be in favor of a small number, and only when their good dispositions will induce us to hope that we may employ them as auxiliaries in religion. A more extensive course of instruc-

[154] Nicholas Patrick Stephen Wiseman (1802-65), born in Seville of Irish parents, was inducted into holy orders at Rome in 1824. He was a noted scholar and controversialist, well known to the English-speaking world, and closely connected with the Oxford movement. In 1848 he was made cardinal-archbishop of Westminster, whereupon he issued an *Appeal to Reason and Good Feeling*, which won him many friends among the English people.— Ed.

tion would undoubtedly prove prejudicial to these good Indians, whose simplicity is such that they might easily be imposed upon, if they were to come in contact with error, whilst it is the source of all truth and virtue when enlightened by the flambeau of faith. La Harpe himself, speaking of the Apostolic laborers of our society, says that the perfection of our ministry consists in illumining by faith the ignorance of the savage.[155]

To facilitate the attainment of the end in view, we have chosen the place of the first missionary station, formed the plan of the village, made a division of the lands, determined the form of the various buildings, &c. The buildings deemed most necessary and useful at present are, a church, schools, work houses, store houses, &c. Next, we have made regulations respecting public worship, religious exercises, instructions, catechisms, confraternities, the administration of the Sacraments, singing, music, &c. All this is to be executed in conformity with the plan formerly adopted in the Missions of Paraguay.

Such are the resolutions which we have adopted, and [148] which we submit to be approved, amended or modified, by those who have the greater glory of God at heart, and who, by their position and the graces of their state of life, are designed by the Most High to communicate to us the true spirit of our Society.

Believe me to be,

Rev. and dear Father Provincial,

Your devoted son in Christ,

P. J. De Smet, S.J.

---

[155] Probably Jean François de La Harpe (1739-1803), a French critic and satirist, who from being a Voltairean became an ardent Christian in the latter years of his life.— Ed.

LETTER XI

St. Mary's, December —, 1841.

Reverend Father:

I SHALL here give you the remarks and observations I have made, and the information I have gathered, during this last journey, concerning some customs and practices of the savages.

In speaking of the animals, I inquired of seven Flat Heads, who were present, how many cows they had killed between them in their last hunt? The number amounted to one hundred and eighty-nine — one alone had killed fifty-nine. One of the Flat Heads told me of three remarkable *hits* which had distinguished him in that chase. He pursued a cow, armed merely with a stone, and killed her by striking her while running, between the horns; he afterwards killed a second with his knife; and finished his exploits by spearing and strangling a large ox. The young warriors frequently exercise themselves in this manner, to show their agility, dexterity and strength. He who spoke looked like a Hercules. They then, (a rare favor, for they are not boasters,) kindly showed me the scars left by the balls and arrows of the Black Feet in their different encounters. One of them bore the scars of four balls which had pierced his thigh; the only consequence of which was a little stiffness of the leg, scarcely perceptible. Another had his arm and breast pierced by a ball. A third, beside some wounds from a knife and spear, had an arrow, five inches [150] deep, in his belly. A fourth had still two balls in his body. One among them, a cripple, had his leg broken by a ball sent by an enemy concealed in a hole; leaping on one leg he fell upon the Black Foot, and the hiding place of the foe

became his grave. "These Black Feet," I remarked, "are terrible people." The Indian who last spoke replied in the sense of the words of Napoleon's grenadier, "Oui, mais ils meurent vite apres." I expressed a desire to know the medicines which they use in such cases; they, much surprised at my question, replied, laughing, "we apply nothing to our wounds, they close of themselves." This recalled to me the reply of Captain Bridger in the past year. He had had, within four years, two quivers-full of arrows in his body. Being asked if the wounds had been long suppurating, he answered in a comical manner, "among the mountains nothing corrupts." [156]

The Indians who live on Clarke river are of the middle size.[157] The women are very filthy. Their faces, hands

[156] James Bridger was for nearly fifty years well known as a trapper, hunter, and guide throughout the Rocky Mountains. De Smet speaks of him as "one of the truest specimens of a real trapper and Rocky Mountain man." Born in Virginia in 1804, his parents removed to Missouri before the War of 1812-15. He was first apprenticed to a St. Louis blacksmith, but as early as 1822 went to the mountains with Andrew Henry. Becoming one of Ashley's band, he explored Great Salt Lake in 1824-25, and by 1830 had visited Yellowstone Park. He afterwards entered the American Fur Company, in whose service he was retained until he built Fort Bridger in 1843. There he lived for many years with his Indian (Shoshoni) wife, greatly aiding Western emigration. His ability as a topographer was remarkable, and he knew the trans-Mississippi country as did few others. His services as a guide were, therefore, in great demand for all government and large private expeditions, General Sheridan consulting him in reference to an Indian campaign as late as 1868. As the West became civilized, and lost its distinctive frontier features, Bridger retired to a farm near Kansas City, where he died in 1881. His name is attached to several Western regions, notably Bridger's Peak, in southwestern Montana. For his portrait (taken about 1865) see Montana Historical Society *Contributions*, iii, p. 181; the figure of the "Trapper" in the dome of the Montana State capitol at Helena, is also said to be a portrait of this picturesque character. Bridger was so noted for his remarkable tales of Western adventures and wonders that his descriptions of Yellowstone Park were long uncredited, being contemptuously referred to as "Jim Bridger's lies." Apropos of this tale of arrow-wounds, it may be noted that in 1835 Dr. Marcus Whitman extracted from Bridger's shoulder an iron arrowhead that had been embedded therein for several years.— Ed.

[157] Clark's River (or more exactly, Clark's Fork of Columbia) was named by the explorers Lewis and Clark September 6, 1805, upon reaching the upper forks

and feet are black and stiff with dirt. They rub them every morning with a composition of red and brown earth mixed up with fish oil. Their hair, always long and dishevelled, serves them for a towel to wipe their hands on. Their garment is generally tattered, and stiff and shining with dust and grease. They seem to be less subjected to slavish labor than the squaws that live East of the Mountains, still they have to toil hard, and to do whatever is most difficult. They are obliged to carry all the household furniture or to row the canoe when they move from one place to another at home, they fetch the wood and the water, clean the fish, prepare the meals, gather the roots and fruits of the season, and when any leisure time is left, they spend it in making mats, baskets and hats of bull-rushes. What must appear rather singular is, [151] that the men more frequently handle the needle than the squaws. Their chief occupations, however, are fishing and hunting. These Indians suffer much from ophthalmic affections. Scarcely a cabin is to be found on Clarke river, in which there is not a blind or one eyed person, or some one laboring under some disease of the eye. This probably proceeds from two causes — first, because they are frequently on the water and exposed from morning till night to the direct and reflected rays of the sun, and next, because living in low cabins made of bull-rushes, the large fire they make in the centre fills it with smoke, which must gradually injure their eyes.

Conjurers are found here as well as in some parts of

---

of its tributary the Bitterroot. It takes the name of Missoula from the junction of Bitterroot and Hell Gate rivers, but becomes distinctly Clark's Fork after receiving its great tributary from the northeast, the Flathead River. Its general course is north from the southern border of Montana, until turning slightly northwest it crosses into Idaho and broadens out into Pend d'Oreille Lake, running thence in a northwest course until it empties into the Columbia just on the boundary line between Washington and British Columbia. The bands referred to as "Clarke River" tribes are chiefly of Salishan stock — the Flatheads, Cœur d'Alène, and Pend d'Oreille.— Ed.

Europe. They are a kind of physicians. Whatever may be the complaint of the patient these gentlemen have him stretched out on his back, and his friends and relatives are ordered to stand round him, each one armed with two sticks of unequal length. The doctor or conjurer neither feels the pulse nor looks at the tongue, but with a solemn countenance commences to sing some mournful strain, whilst those present accompany him with their voices and beat time with the sticks. During the singing the doctor operates on the patient, he kneels before him, and placing his closed fists on the stomach, leans on him with all his might. Excessive pain makes the patient roar, but his roarings are lost in the noise, for the doctor and the bystanders raise their voices higher in proportion as the sick man gives utterance to his sufferings. At the end of each stanza the doctor joins his hands, applies them to the patient's lips, and blows with all his strength. This operation is repeated till at last the doctor takes from the patient's mouth, either a little white stone, or the claw of some bird or animal, which he exhibits to the bystanders, protesting that he has [152] removed the cause of the disease, and that the patient will soon recover. But whether he recover or die, the quack is here as elsewhere rewarded for his exertions. *Mundus vult decipi*, is the watchword of quacks, jugglers and mountebanks; and it seems that the Indian conjurers are not unacquainted with it. I received this description of their method of curing diseases from a clerk of the Hudson Bay Company. I shall subjoin another anecdote concerning the religious ideas entertained by the Tchenooks.[158] All men, they say, were created by a divinity called *Etalapasse*, but they were created imperfect or unfinished. Their mouths were not cleft. their eyes were closed, and their hands and feet were immovable; so that they were rather living lumps of flesh than men.

[158] For the Chinook (Tchenook) Indians see our volume vi, p. 240, note 40.— Ed.

Another divinity, whom they call *Ecannum* (resembling the *Nanaboojoo* of the Potowattamies,) less powerful, but more benevolent than the former, seeing the imperfect state of these men, took a sharp stone and with it opened their mouths and eyes. He also gave motion to their hands and feet. This merciful divinity did not rest satisfied with conferring these first favors on the human race. He taught them to make canoes and paddles, nets and all the implements now used by the Indians. He threw large rocks into the rivers to obstruct their courses, and confine the fish in order that the Indians might catch them in larger quantities.

When I speak of the Indian character, I do not mean to include the Indians that live in the neighborhood of civilized man, and have intercourse with him. It is acknowledged in the United States, that the whites who trade with those Indians, not only demoralize them by the sale of spirituous liquors, but communicate to them their own vices, of which some are shocking and revolting to nature. The Indian left to himself, is circumspect and discreet in his [153] words and actions. He seldom gives way to passion; except against the hereditary enemies of his nation. When there is question of them, his words breathe hatred and vengeance. He seeks revenge, because he firmly believes that it is the only means by which he can retrieve his honor when he has been insulted or defeated; because he thinks that only low and vulgar minds can forget an injury, and he fosters rancor because he deems it a virtue. With respect to others, the Indian is cool and dispassionate, checking the least violent emotion of his heart. Thus should he know that one of his friends is in danger of being attacked by an enemy lying in wait for him, he will not openly tell him so, (for he would deem this an act of fear,) but will ask him where he intends to go that day, and after having received an answer, will add with the same indifference, that a wild

beast lies hidden on the way. This figurative remark will render his friend as cautious as if he were acquainted with all the designs and movements of the enemy. Thus again, if an Indian has been hunting without success, he will go to the cabin of one of his friends, taking care not to show the least sign of disappointment or impatience, nor to speak of the hunger which he suffers. He will sit down and smoke the calumet with as much indifference as if he had been successful in the chase. He acts in the same manner when he is among strangers. To give signs of disappointment or impatience, is looked upon by the Indians as a mark of cowardice, and would earn for them the appellation of "old woman," which is the most injurious and degrading epithet that can be applied to an Indian. If an Indian be told that his children have distinguished themselves in battle,— that they have taken several scalps, and have carried off many enemies and horses, without giving the least sign of joy, he will answer: "They have done [154] well." If he be informed that they have been killed or made prisoners, he will utter no complaint, but will simply say: "It is unfortunate." He will make no inquiries into the circumstances; several days must elapse before he asks for further information.

The Indian is endowed with extraordinary sagacity, and easily learns whatever demands attention. Experience and observation render him conversant with things that are unknown to the civilized man. Thus, he will traverse a plain or forest one or two hundred miles in extent, and will arrive at a particular place with as much precision as the mariner by the aid of the compass. Unless prevented by obstacles, he, without any material deviation, always travels in a straight line, regardless of path or road. In the same manner he will point out the exact place of the sun, when it is hidden by mists or clouds. Thus, too, he follows with the

greatest accuracy, the traces of men or animals, though these should have passed over the leaves or the grass, and nothing be perceptible to the eye of the white man. He acquires this knowledge from a constant application of the intellectual faculties, and much time and experience are required to perfect this perceptive quality. Generally speaking, he has an excellent memory.— He recollects all the articles that have been concluded upon in their councils and treaties, and the exact time when such councils were held or such treaties ratified.

Some writers have supposed that the Indians are guided by instinct, and have even ventured to assert that their children would find their way through the forests as well as those further advanced in age. I have consulted some of the most intelligent Indians on this subject, and they have uniformly told me that they acquire this practical knowledge by long and close attention to the growth of [155] plants and trees, and to the sun and stars. It is known that the north side of a tree is covered with a greater quantity of moss than any other, and that the boughs and foliage on the south side are more abundant and luxuriant. Similar observations tend to direct them, and I have more than once found their reflections useful to myself in the excursions I have made through the forests. Parents teach their children to remark such things, and these in their turn sometimes add new discoveries to those of their fathers. They measure distances by a day's journey. When an Indian travels alone, his day's journey will be about 50 or 60 English miles, but only 15 or 20 when he moves with the camp. They divide their journeys, as we do the hours, into halves and quarters; and when in their councils they decide on war or on distant excursions, they lay off these journeys with astonishing accuracy on a kind of map, which they trace on bark or skins. Though they have no knowledge of geography, nor

of any science that relates to it, yet they form with sufficient accuracy maps of the countries which they know; nothing but the degrees of longitude and latitude are wanting in some to make them exact.

I remember to have read in Fr. Charlevoix' journal that the Indians are remarkably superstitious with respect to dreams.[159] This is still the case, though they interpret them in various ways. Some maintain that during sleep the rational part of the soul travels about, whilst the sensitive continues to animate the body. Others say that the good Manitoo or familiar spirit gives salutary advice concerning the future, whilst others hold that in sleep the soul visits the objects about which she dreams. But all look upon dreams as sacred, and as the ordinary channels through which the Great Spirit and the Manitoos communicate [156] their designs to man. Impressed with this idea, the Indian is at a loss to conceive why we disregard them. As they look upon dreams as representations of the desires of some unearthly genius, or of the commands of the Great Spirit, they deem themselves bound to observe and obey them. Charlevoix tells us somewhere, and I have seen instances of a similar kind, that an Indian who had dreamed that he had cut off his finger, actually cut it, and prepared himself for the act by a fast. Another having dreamed that he was a prisoner among a hostile nation, not knowing how to act, consulted the jugglers, and according to their decision, had himself bound to a stake, and fire applied to several parts of his body. I doubt whether the quotation is correct, as I have not the work of Charlevoix to consult, but I know that I have described a superstitious belief which is generally held by the Indians of the present day.

When the Pottowatomies or any of the northern nations make or renew a treaty of peace, they present a wampum,

[159] For Charlevoix see our volume xiii, p. 116, notes 81, 82.— Ed.

sash or collar. The wampum is made of a shell called baceinum, and shaped into small beads in the form of pearls. When they conclude an alliance, offensive or defensive, with other tribes, they send them a wampum, sash and tomahawk dipped in blood, inviting them to come and drink of the blood of their enemies. This figurative expression often becomes a reality. Among the nations of the West the calumet is looked upon with equal reverence, whether in peace or war. They smoke the calumet to confirm their treaties and alliances. This smoking is considered a solemn engagement, and he who should violate it, would be deemed unworthy of confidence, infamous, and an object of divine vengeance. In time of war, the calumet and all its ornaments are red. Sometimes it is partly red, and partly of some other color. By the color and the manner [157] of disposing the feathers, a person acquainted with their practices, knows at first sight what are the designs or intentions of the nation that presents the calumet.

The smoking of the calumet forms a part of all their religious ceremonies. It is a kind of sacred rite which they perform when they prepare themselves to invoke the Great Spirit, and take the sun and moon, the earth and the water as witnesses of the sincerity of their intentions, and the fidelity with which they promise to comply with their engagements. However ridiculous this custom of smoking may appear to some, it has a good effect among the Indians. Experience has taught them that the smoke of the calumet dispels the vapors of the brain, aids them to think and judge with greater accuracy and precision, and excites their courage. This seems to be the principal reason why they have introduced it into their councils, where it is looked upon as the seal of their decisions. It is also sent as a pledge of fidelity to those whom they wish to consult, or with whom they desire to form an alliance. I know that

the opinions of the Indians concerning the beneficial effects of smoking the calumet will be sanctioned by few persons, because it is demonstrated from experience that the smoke of tobacco acts as a powerful narcotic upon the nervous system, and produces suporific and debilitating effects; but it should be remembered that such effects are not produced when the smoke is inhaled into the lungs, as is the universal practice of the Indians.

The funeral ceremonies of the Calkobins, who inhabit New Caledonia, west of the mountains, are fantastic and revolting. Mr. Cox, in his journal, tells us that the body of the deceased is exposed in his lodge for nine days, and on the tenth is burned.[160] They choose for this purpose an elevated place, and there erect a funeral pile.—[158] In the meanwhile, they invite their neighbors from all sides, entreating them to repair to the ceremony. All the preparations being completed, the corpse is placed on the pile, which they light, while the spectators manifest the greatest joy. All that the deceased possessed is placed around the body; and if he be a person of distinction, his friends purchase

---

[160] The following description is taken almost verbatim from the book of Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River* (New York, 1832), pp. 328-330. By the Calkobins is intended the Talkotins, a poor rendering of the Indian tribal name Lhtho'ten, or people of Fraser River. This was a tribe of Carrier (Taculli) Indians of the Tinneh stock, who inhabited the region around the fur-trade post of Alexandria, on Fraser River. By a census of about 1825 they numbered but 166; the revolting customs relative to the disposal of the dead were, however, common to all the Carrier Indians, whose name is said by some to have been given because of the burden of their husband's ashes, worn by the widows of the tribe. More probably, the name was derived from their function of aiding in "carries" or portages across the upper Rockies.

New Caledonia was discovered by Alexander Mackenzie in 1793; its posts were begun under Simon Fraser (1805-06). During the fur-trading period, it was an important division of the Hudson's Bay Company's Pacific provinces; but was dependent upon the Columbia district, with headquarters at Vancouver. The chief posts of New Caledonia were St. James, Stuart Lake, and Alexandria. For its boundaries, etc., consult Ross's *Oregon Settlers*, in our volume vii, p. 194, note 61.— Ed.

for him a cloak, a shirt, and a pair of breeches: these are laid beside him. The medicine man must be present, and, for the last time, has recourse to his enchantments, to recall the departed to life. Not succeeding, he covers the dead body — that is, he makes a present of a piece of cloth, or leather, and thus appeases the anger of the relatives, and escapes the vengeance they have a right to inflict upon him. During the nine days on which the corpse is exposed, the widow is obliged to remain near it from the rising to the setting of the sun; and, notwithstanding the excessive heats of summer, no relaxation is allowed from this barbarous custom. While the doctor is occupied in his last operation, the widow must lie down beside the corpse, until he orders her to withdraw from the pile; and this order is not given until the unfortunate being is covered with blisters. She then is made to pass and repass her hands through the flames, to collect the fat, which flows from the body: with this she rubs her person. When the friends of the deceased observe that the sinews of the legs and arms begin to contract, they force the miserable widow to return to the pile, and straighten the limbs.

If, during the lifetime of the husband, the woman had been unfaithful to him, or had neglected to provide for his wants, his relations then revenge themselves upon her; they throw her upon the pile, from whence she is dragged by her own relations. She is again cast upon it, and again withdrawn, until she falls into a state of insensibility.

[159] The body being consumed, the widow gathers together the largest bones; these she encloses in a birch box, which she is forced to carry for many years. She is looked upon while in this state as a slave; the hardest and most laborious work falls to her lot; she must obey every order of the women, and even of the children; and the least disobedience or repugnance draws down upon her severe

chastisement. The ashes of her husband are deposited in a tomb, and it is her duty to remove from thence the weeds. These unhappy women frequently destroy themselves to avoid so many cruelties. At the end of three or four years the relatives agree to put an end to her mourning. They prepare a great feast for this occasion, and invite all the neighbors. The widow is then introduced, still carrying the bones of the husband; these are taken from her, and shut up in a coffin, which is fastened at the end by a stake about twelve feet long. All the guests extol her painful widowhood; one of whom pours upon her head a vessel of oil, whilst another covers her with down. It is only after this ceremony that the widow can marry again; but, as may be readily supposed, the number of those who hazard a second marriage is very small.

I have the honor to be

Rev. and dear Father Provincial,

Your devoted servant and son,

P. J. De Smet, S.J.

LETTER XII

St. Marie, Dec. 30th, 1841.

Reverend Father:

I have given you the happy and consoling result of my journey in November. Before the close of the year I have yet to make you acquainted with what has passed during my absence, and since my return, among the Flat Heads; all goes to prove what I have advanced in my preceding letters.

The Rev. Fathers Mengarini and Point were not idle during my absence. The following will give you some idea of the state of affairs on my return, both in regard to

material and spiritual matters, as well as the practices and usages established, which could not but tend to strengthen, more and more, our good neophytes.

The plan mentioned in my letters, and unanimously approved, and which we were urged to carry into execution, was, to commence with what appeared to be the most urgent. We enclosed the field destined to become God's portion of the settlement. We started the buildings intended to be hereafter dependencies of the farm, but serving temporarily for a church and residence, on account of the approach of winter, and our wish to unite the whole colony. These works were indispensable, and were carried on with such spirit that in the space of a month the new buildings could shelter from four to five hundred souls.

The Flat Heads, assisting us with their whole heart and [161] strength, had, in a short time, cut from two to three thousand stakes; and the three brothers, with no other tools than the axe, saw and auger, constructed a chapel with pediment, colonade and gallery, balustrade, choir, seats, &c. by St. Martin's day; when they assembled in the little chapel all the catechumens, and continued the instructions which were to end on the third of December, the day fixed for their baptism. In the interval between these two remarkable epochs, there was, on each day, one instruction more than usual. This last instruction, intended chiefly for grown persons, was given at 8 o'clock in the evening, and lasted about an hour and a quarter. These good savages, whose ears and hearts are alike open when the word of God is addressed to them, appeared still better disposed in the evening; the silence being unbroken by the cries of infants or children. Our heavenly Father so graciously heard their prayers, that on St. Francis Xavier's day the good Fathers had the consolation of baptising two hundred and two adults.

So many souls wrested from the demons was more than enough to excite their rage,— seeds of distrust, hindrances occasioned by the best intentioned, the sickness of the interpreter and sexton, at the very moment their assistance was most required; a kind of hurricane, which took place the evening before the baptism, and which overturned three lodges in the camp, the trees torn from their roots, and every thing in appearance about to be uprooted, even to the foundations of the church — the organ unintentionally broken by the savages, on the eve of being applied to so beautiful a purpose — all seemed to conspire against them; but the day for baptism arrives, and every cloud disappears.

The Fathers had intended to solemnize the marriages of [162] the husbands and wives on the same day as their baptism. They had even announced that the ceremony would take place after baptism; but the sacred rite having occupied a much longer time than they supposed, on account of the necessity of interpreting all that was said, they were obliged to defer this sacrament until the next day, trusting to God and the new Christians, for the preservation of their baptismal innocence.

As our former Missionaries have left nothing in writing on the conduct we should observe with regard to marriage, it may, perhaps, be useful to relate here what has been our course, in order that our conduct may be rectified if it has not been judicious.

We hold the principle, that, generally speaking, there are no valid marriages among the savages of these countries; and for this reason; we have not found one, even among the best disposed, who, after marriage had been contracted in their own fashion, did not believe himself justified in sending away his first wife, whenever he thought fit, and taking another. Many even have several wives in the same lodge. It is, however, true, that many when entering the marriage

state, promise that nothing but death will ever separate them; that they will never give their hand to another. But what impassioned man or woman has not said as much? Can we infer from this that the contract is valid, when it is universally received, that even after such promises they have not the less right to do as they please, when they become disgusted with each other? We are then agreed on this principle, that among them, even to the present time, there has been no marriage, because they have never known well in what its essence and obligation consisted. To adopt an opposite view would be to involve oneself in a labyrinth of difficulties, from which it would be [163] very difficult to escape. This was, if I am not mistaken, the conduct of St. Francis Xavier in the Indies, since it is said in his Life, that he praised before the married those whom he supposed to be dearest to them, that they might be more easily induced to keep to one alone. Secondly, supposing then that there were material faults in their marriages, the necessity of a renewal was not spoken of but for the time which followed baptism, and this took place the day following that happy occasion.

After the Fathers had gained the necessary information respecting the degrees of relationship, and had given the necessary dispensations, the marriage ceremony, preceded by a short instruction, was performed, and contributed greatly to give the people a high idea of our holy religion.

The twenty-four marriages then contracted presented that mixture of simplicity, of respectful affection, and profound joy, which are the sure indications of a good conscience. There were among the couples, good old men and women; but their presence only rendered the ceremony more respectable in the eyes of those assembled; for among the Flat Heads all that relates to religion is sacred; unhappy he who would so express himself before them, as

to lead them to believe that he thought otherwise. They left the chapel, their hearts filled with sentiments purified by that grace which constitutes the charm of every state of life, and especially of those in wedlock.

The only thing that appeared strange to them was, when the Fathers spoke of taking the names of witnesses; but when they were told that this was only done because the church so ordained, to give more authority and dignity to the marriage contract, they no longer saw in it any thing but what was reasonable, and the question was, who should be witness for the others?

[164] The same astonishment was manifested with regard to god-fathers. The interpreter had translated the word god-father, a term which is not in their language, by second father. The poor savages not knowing what this meant, or what consequences this title would imply, were not eager to make a choice. To be a god-father moreover offered no great attraction. As soon as we made them understand it, their difficulties vanished, and the more easily; for not to multiply spritual affinities, a god-father only was given to the men, and a god-mother to the women; and as to the obligations attached to the honour of being sponsors, they were much less here than elsewhere, the Black Gowns promising to take upon themselves the greatest part of the burden. For the first baptisms our choice of sponsors was very limited; only thirteen grown persons were qualified to act in this capacity,— but the most aged persons being baptised before the others, they, without laying aside the lighted candle, (the symbol of faith) were chosen for the second division; and so in like manner with the rest.

The day preceding the baptism, the Fathers, on account of their labors, were only able to collect the colony twice; besides, F. Mengarini was indisposed. In the evening, however, he assembled the people, and great was their

astonishment on beholding the decorations of the chapel. Some days previously the Fathers had engaged all who were willing, to make matts of rushes or straws. All the women, girls and children, assembled eagerly for this good work, so that they had enough to cover the floor and ceiling, and hang round the walls. These matts, ornamented with festoons of green, made a pretty drapery around the altar. On a canopy was inscribed the holy name of Jesus. Among the ornaments they placed a picture of the Blessed Virgin over the tabernacle; on the door of the tabernacle a [165] representation of the heart of Jesus. The pictures of the way of the Cross, in red frames; the lights, the silence of night, the approach of the important day, the calm after the hurricane, which had burst on them only a few moments before — all these circumstances united, had, with the grace of God, so well disposed the minds and hearts of our Indians, that it would have been scarcely possible to find on earth an assembly of savages more resembling a company of saints. This was the beautiful bouquet which the Fathers were permitted to present to Saint Francis Xavier. The next day they were engaged from eight o'clock in the morning until half past ten at night, in the church, excepting only one hour and a half, which they gave to repose. The following was the order followed. First, they baptized the chiefs and married men. These were chosen as godfathers for the young men and little boys; then the married women, whose husbands were living with them; afterwards the widows and wives who had been cast off; and, lastly, the young women and girls.

It was gratifying to hear with what intelligence these good savages replied to all the questions addressed to them, and to see them praying at the moment of receiving baptism. At the end, each received a taper whose blended light beautifully illuminated our humble chapel.

But let us come to something still more edifying. I shall not speak of their assiduous attendance at the instructions, — of their eagerness to hear our words,— of the evident profit they received from them; all this is common in the course of a mission; but rarely do we witness the heroic sacrifices which these Indians have made. Many, who had two wives, have retained her whose children were most numerous, and with all possible respect dismissed the other. One evening, a savage came to seek the [166] Fathers at the lodge, which was filled with Indians, and unabashed by any merely human consideration, asked what he should do in his present circumstances? On the instant he acted according to the instructions given him; he dismissed his youngest wife, giving her what he would have wished another to give to his sister, if in the same situation, and was re-united to his first wife, whom he had forsaken. After an instruction, a young woman, asking to speak, said that "she desired very much to receive baptism, but that she had been so wicked she dared not make the request." Each one would have made a public confession. A great number of young mothers, married according to the mode of the savages, but abandoned by their husbands, who were of some other tribe, renounced them most willingly, to have the happiness of being baptised.

The ordinary regulations observed in the village are as follows: when the *Angelus* rings, the Indians rise from sleep; half an hour after, the morning prayers are said in common; all assist at Mass and at the instruction. A second instruction is given at evening, towards sun set, and lasts about an hour and a quarter. At two o'clock in the afternoon we have the regular catechism for the children, at which grown persons may assist if they think proper. The children are formed into two divisions: the first is composed exclusively of those who know the first

prayers; the second of the smaller children. One of the Fathers each morning visits the sick, to furnish them with medicines, and give them such assistance as their wants may require.

We have adopted the system of instruction and bestowing rewards, in usage in the schools of the brothers of the christian doctrine. During catechism, which lasts about an hour, we have recitations and explanations, intermingled [167] with canticles. Every day, for each good answer, tickets of approbation are given; one or more, according to the difficulty of the question proposed. Experience has proved that these tickets given at once, are less embarrassing than when we mark their names on a list; the former plan takes less time, and interests the children more, rendering them, besides, more assiduous and careful. These tickets serve, at the same time, as certificates of attendance at catechism, and as tokens of intelligence and good will, they please the parent not less than their children. The former are incited to make their children repeat what has been said at catechism, to render them capable of answering better the following day; and also with a desire of improving themselves. The wish to see their children distinguish themselves, has attracted almost the whole colony to catechism: none of the chiefs who have children fail to be there; and there is not less emulation among the parents than among the children themselves. A still greater value is attached to the tickets, from the exactitude and justice with which the deserving are rewarded. They who have obtained good tickets during the week, are rewarded on Sunday with crosses, medals, or ribbons, publicly distributed. On the first Sunday of every month they distribute to those who have received the most good tickets in the course of the month, medals or pictures, which become their private property. These pictures, preserved with care, are great

stimulants, not only to the study of their catechism but also to the practice of piety. They are monuments of victory, examples of virtue, exhortations to piety, and models of perfection. Their rarity, and the efforts necessary to obtain them, also enhance their worth. As we desire to inspire the savages, who are naturally inclined to idleness, with a love for work, it has been judged suitable to reward [168] their little efforts in the same manner as we recompense their improvement in, and knowledge of their catechism.

To maintain order, and promote emulation among them, the catechism children are divided into seven or eight sections, of six each; the boys on one side, the girls on the other. At the head of each section there is a chief, who must assist the children placed under him to learn their catechism; that thus every child may indulge the hope of meriting a reward at the end of the week or month. They are so divided that the competitors, to the number of five or six in each section, may be of nearly equal capacity.

Father Point, who was, immediately after Christmas, to accompany the assembled camps of Flat Heads, Pends-d'oreilles, Nez-perces, &c. prepared for his new campaign by a retreat of eight days. Twenty-four marriages, as I have already said, had been celebrated during my absence, and two hundred and two adults, with little boys and girls from eight to fourteen years of age, had been baptised. There were still, thirty-four couples, who awaited my return, to receive the sacraments of baptism and marriage, or to renew their marriage vows. The Nez-perces had not yet presented their children for baptism. There was an old chief of the Black Feet nation, in the camp, with his son and his little family, five in all, who had been hitherto very assiduous in their attendance at prayers and catechism. The day succeeding my arrival I commenced giving three

instructions daily, besides the catechism, which was taught by the other Fathers. They profited so well, that with the grace of God, a hundred and fifteen Flat Heads, with three chiefs at their head, thirty Nez-perces with their chief, and the Black Foot chief and his family, presented themselves at the baptismal font on Christmas day. I began my Masses at seven o'clock in the morning; at five o'clock, P. M. I [169] still found myself in the chapel: The heart can conceive, but the tongue cannot express the emotions which such a consoling spectacle may well awaken. The following day I celebrated a solemn Mass of Thanksgiving for the signal favours with which our Lord had deigned to visit his people. From six to seven hundred new Christians, with bands of little children, baptised in the past year,— all assembled in a poor little chapel, covered with rushes — in the midst of a desert, where but lately, the name of God was scarcely known; offering to the Creator their regenerated hearts, protesting that they would persevere in His holy service even to death, was an offering, without doubt, most agreeable to God, and which, we trust, will draw down the dews of heaven upon the Flat Head nation and the neighbouring tribes.

On the 29th the large camp, accompanied by the Fathers, left us for the great buffalo hunt, and joined the Pends-d'oreilles, who awaited them at two day's journey hence; there will be above two hundred lodges. I am filled with hope for the success and fresh victories, with which, I trust, God will deign to reward the zeal of his servant. In the mean time we occupy ourselves (Father Mengarini and myself) in translating the catechism into the Flat Head tongue; and in preparing one hundred and fifty persons for their first communion.

Our good brothers and the Canadians are engaged at the same time in erecting around our establishment a strong

pallisade, fortified with bastions, to shelter us from the incursions of the Black Feet, whom we daily expect to visit us. Our confidence in God is not weakened; we take the precautions which prudence dictates, and remain without fear at our post.

A young Sinpoil has just arrived in our camp, and these [170] are his words: "I am a Sinpoil, my nation is compassionate. I have been sent to hear your words, and learn the prayer you teach the Flat Heads. The Sinpoils desire also to know it, and to imitate their example." [161] This young man proposes to pass the winter in our camp, and return in the spring to his own nation, to sow among them the seeds of the gospel.

The whole Flat Head nation converted — four hundred Kalispels baptised — eighty Nez-perces, several Cœurs-d'aliene, many Kooetenays, Black Feet, Serpents and Banacs,— the Sinpoils, the Chaudieres,[162] who open their arms to us, and eagerly ask for Fathers to instruct them; the earnest demands from Fort Vancouver on the part of the Governor,[163] and of the Rev. Mr. Blanchette, assuring us

[161] Sanpoil has been variously interpreted as a French word (meaning "without hairs") or as the English rendering of a native word. They were a tribe of Salishan stock, resident upon the upper Columbia, near a river in northeastern Washington called from their name. The Sanpoil did not prove amenable to missionary effort. The governor of Washington Territory in 1870 represents them as the least civilized and most independent aborigines of the territory, clinging to their native religion and customs. Since then, they have been located on the Colville reservation, where their reputation for honesty and industry is not high. With their near kindred the Nespelin, they number about four hundred.— Ed.

[162] The Chaudière (or Kettle) Indians were so named from their habitat near Kettle Falls of the Columbia. Their native name was Shwoyelpi (Skoyelpi), rendered Wheelpoo by Lewis and Clark. They were early brought under Catholic influence, becoming satisfactory neophytes. The original tribe became extinct about 1854; but their place was supplied by natives of the vicinity, of similar origin. They are now known as Colville Indians, and to the number of about three hundred live on the reservation of that name, where the majority are Catholic communicants.— Ed.

[163] For Fort Vancouver and its governor, Dr. John McLoughlin, see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, pp. 296, 297, notes 81, 82.— Ed.

of the good desires and dispositions of a great number of nations, ready to receive the gospel,— in a word, a vast country, which only awaits the arrival of true ministers of God, to rally round the standard of the Cross — behold the beautiful bouquet, Rev. Father, which we have the happiness of presenting you at the close of 1841.[164] It is at the foot of the crucifix that you are accustomed to ask counsel of heaven for the welfare of the nations entrusted to your children. Our number is very far from sufficient for the pressing and real wants of this people. The Protestants are on the *qui vive*. Send us then some Fathers and Brothers to assist us, and thousands of souls will bless you at the throne of God for all eternity.

Recommending myself to your holy prayers,

I have the honour to be, with the most profound respect and esteem,

Rev. Father, Yours, &c.

P. J. De Smet, S.J.

---

[164] Francis Norbert Blanchet had been a parish priest in the diocese of Montreal. In 1838, when a call came from the Canadians in the valley of the Willamette for a priest to minister to their settlement, Blanchet was sent out with the Hudson's Bay brigade, arriving at Fort Vancouver in the autumn of that year. Early in January, 1840, St. Paul's parish, in Willamette Valley, was established by Blanchet, and the church erected therefor in 1836 was occupied. In 1843 Blanchet was appointed vicar apostolic of the territory of the British crown west of the Rockies. Going to Montreal for consecration, he afterwards visited Europe, where he was created archbishop of Oregon, with a seat at Oregon City. For his portrait see Lyman, *Oregon* (New York, 1903), iii, p. 422. His *Historical Sketches of the Catholic church in Oregon during the past forty years* was published at Portland in 1878.— Ed.

BOOK II

NARRATIVE OF A YEAR'S RESIDENCE AMONG THE INDIAN TRIBES OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Madison Forks,[165] 15th August, 1842.

Rev. and dear Father:

AFTER a journey of four months and a half across an ocean of prairies and mountains, where we met many an obstacle, we arrived this day a year ago, under the auspices of the Queen of Heaven, at one of the Forts of the honorable company of Hudson Bay, called Fort Hall. Mr. Ermantiger, the estimable commander of this Fort, received us in the most friendly manner, and loaded us with favours. At this place we found the vanguard of our dear neophytes awaiting us. How joyful and happy was this meeting. What had they not done to obtain Black Gowns to visit them? Four times had their deputations crossed the Western desert — eight of their people had perished on the road, three from sickness, and five fell victims to the Scioux tribe. Twice from the Bitter Root river almost all their people had transported themselves to the Green river, a distance of more than five hundred miles from their usual encampment. In fine, those who then joined us had at the first news of our approach again traversed the half of that space to meet us; nor could they, on [174] first seeing us, express their feelings but by their silence. Very soon, however, they gave vent to the grateful sentiments of their hearts, in such a manner as to astonish us. "I am very ignorant and wicked,"

[165] Madison River is one of the three upper branches of the Missouri. Rising in Yellowstone Park, it is formed by the junction of Gibbon and Firehole rivers, and at first flows north through a mountainous and rocky country; but in its lower reaches courses through a fertile valley.— ED.

exclaimed the chief Wistelpo to his companions, "nevertheless I am grateful to the Great Spirit for all he has done for us." Detailing all the benefits he had received he terminated his discourse in the following manner: "Yes, my dear friends, my heart is filled with contentment, notwithstanding its wickedness. I do not despair of the goodness of God, I only wish for life to employ it in prayer; never will I give up praying; I will continue to pray until my death, and when that hour comes I will throw myself into the arms of the Master of Life. If it be His will that I should be lost I will submit to his decree. Should he wish to save me I will bless him forever. Once more I repeat, my heart is happy. What can we do to prove to our Fathers that we love them."— Here the chief made some practical reflections.

They informed us that since I left them in 1840 their brothers had always remained in the same dispositions; that according to the plan I had laid out for them, all the people met twice every day, and three times on Sundays, to recite in common the prayers I had taught them. They also told us that the chest containing the sacred ornaments and vases, which we had left in their charge, was carried about as the ark of salvation, wherever they went; that five or six children, dying after having received the sacrament of baptism, had taken their flight to heaven; that a young warrior, the day after his baptism, had died from the effects of a wound, which, without the aid of a miracle, would have carried him off long before; and finally, hat a young child, finding herself at the point of death, solicited baptism with the greatest earnestness, and after having received [175] this favour from the hands of Peter, an Iroquois, she repeated three times to the witnesses of her happiness: "pray for me — pray for me — pray for me;" then she prayed herself and sang canticles with a stronger

Indian Mode of Travelling

voice than any of the others, and upon drawing her last breath, she exclaimed, pointing towards heaven: "Oh! what a beautiful sight! I behold Mary, my mother, happiness does not belong to earth, in heaven alone must you seek it. Listen to what the Black Gowns tell you, because they profess the truth;" and immediately afterwards expired.

We left Fort Hall on the 19th of the month, conducted by our new guides, who were not long in giving us striking proof of their devotion towards us. At the crossing of a very rapid river, called the Lewis' Fork or Snake River, from the savages who people its borders, one of our brothers, not being able to guide the mules of his cart, was dragged into a place so deep that his whole equipage was plunged under the water; immediately the good savages threw themselves into the river, raised the cart out of the water, employed their hands and feet so usefully, that only three mules were drowned and some bags of provisions lost.

The 29th we met near the source of the Missouri, called the Beaver Head, a detachment of Flat Heads, having as their leader Ensyla, called the Little Chief, who has since received in baptism the name of Michael, on account of his fidelity and courage. A few days previous, a party of Indians having been discovered on the adjacent heights, a cry was raised of "the Black Feet! the Black Feet!" Instantly the little camp put itself on the defensive. Two of the bravest Flat Heads, lifting up their muskets in the air, started off at full gallop to reconnoitre the enemy. Already they had disappeared from our view, leaving us somewhat anxious, but they soon returned, at the head of about ten [176] strangers. They were not the Black Feet, but a party of the Banac tribe, a species of men half inimical and half friendly to the Flat Heads, who for that very reason, as we

shall see later, were more to be feared than open enemies. When Michael joined us, the camp of these people was already united with ours. Their chief and Michael knew each other but too well, from having once been engaged in an affair in which Michael, finding himself shamefully betrayed and attacked by a whole Banac village, had only been able to save himself and six men, who accompanied him, by killing the brother of the Banac chief, with eight of his people. They nevertheless shook hands with each other, and separated the next day, without appearing to entertain any unpleasant recollections. I had a conversation with the Banac chief on the subject of prayer. He listened attentively to what I told him, and promised to do amongst his people what the Flat Heads did amongst theirs. The 30th, after having wound through a mountain pass, to which we gave the name of the Fathers' Defile, we advanced as far as a large plain, on the western verge of which the Flat Heads were encamped. As we drew near, runners approached us constantly. Already, Stiettiet Loodzo, surnamed the bravest of the brave, and distinguished from the others by a large red ribbon, had presented himself. Soon after, we perceived at a distance another savage, of tall stature, hastening towards us with rapid strides. At the same time, many cried out —"Paul," "Paul;" and indeed it was Paul, surnamed "Big Face," the great chief of the nation; Paul, who, owing to his virtue and his great age, had been baptized the preceding year — Paul, whom they though absent, but who had just arrived, as though by God's special permission, that he might have the satisfaction of presenting us himself to his [177] people. At sun-set we were in the midst of a most affecting scene. The Missionaries were surrounded by their neophytes — men, women, young people, and children in their mothers' arms, all anxious to be among the first to shake hands with us. Every heart

was moved. That evening was certainly beautiful. On the feast of the holy name of Mary, the whole camp renewed the consecration of themselves to their future Patroness, which had been previously made by the vanguard of the first settlement.

About the time the Church celebrates the feast of Mary's pure heart, it seemed as though the God of the Christians wished to give to *her* new children the consolation of seeing the principal eras in their lives coincide, and in some manner become identified with those happy days consecrated especially to her honor. It was on the feast which the Church celebrates in memory of her triumph, that we first met with the Flat Heads; it will be on the 24th of September, also one of the festivals, that we shall arrive on the borders of our little Paraguay, and on the feast of the Holy Rosary we shall select a beautiful spot for our first settlement, and call it by the holy name of Mary. It is again remarkable that the nomination took place on another feast called the Patrocinium, or Patronage of the Blessed Virgin; and thus, Mary, chosen patroness of the settlement, was hailed for the first time on this spot with the angelical salutation, accompanied by the ringing of bells. It was a great consolation for us to speak of her goodness, in the presence of the representatives of twenty-six different nations. I forgot to mention that on the day we took possession of the Blessed Mary's new demesne, we set up a large cross in the middle of the camp, a circumstance rendered more striking, from having, as they assured me, been predicted [178] by the young girl, called Mary, of whom I spoke to you before. How much I wished that all those who take a sincere interest in the progress of our holy religion, could have been present. How their hearts would have glowed within them on beholding all the good Flat Heads, from the great chief to the smallest child, piously coming up to

press their lips to the wood which was the instrument of the world's salvation, and on their bended knees taking the solemn promise of dying a thousand times rather than abandon prayer, (religion.) I started the 28th October for Fort Colville, which is situated on the Columbia river, to procure provisions.[166] Ours had become so scanty, and we entertained such slight hopes of obtaining them, that we had already thought of converting into fishermen the carpenters of our settlement. In case of their not being successful, and thereby unable to supply our wants, we intended accompanying the savages on their hunting expeditions. Our only building as yet was a wooden house, without a roof, and the winter had already set in. We began by recommending our wants to God, and with God's assistance we found ourselves, on St. Martin's day, in possession of a temporary chapel, large enough to contain all the colony, with about one hundred of the Pierced Nose tribe, whom curiosity had attracted to the neighborhood. Since that period they have been so careful in avoiding sin, so exact in attending our instructions, and the fruit of the divine word has been so visible in our settlement, that on the 3d of December two hundred and two catechumens were ranged in our chapel, waiting for baptism. This was

[166] Fort Colville was a Hudson's Bay Company post, built in 1825 to supersede the fort at Spokane, which was too far inland for convenient access. The site was at Kettle Falls on the east bank of the stream (see Alexander Ross, *Fur Hunters*, ii, p. 162), the post being named for the London governor of the company, Eden Colville. The fort became an important station on the route of the Columbia brigade; here accounts for the district were made up, and the dignitaries of the company entertained. Gov. George Simpson had been at Fort Colville in the summer before De Smet's visit, when Archibald Macdonald was the factor in charge. This post was maintained some time after the Americans acquired the Oregon Territory, but about 1857 it was removed north of the international boundary line. In 1859 the United States government built a military post called Fort Colville some miles east of the old fur-trading stockade, near the present town of Colville, Washington. The neighboring Indians having become peaceful, the fort is no longer garrisoned.— Ed.

too beautiful an offering to St. Francis Xavier, apostle of the Indians, not to excite the fury of man's great enemy.— Accordingly, for a few days previously we encountered multiplied trials. To speak only of the most visible, the prefect, [179] interpreter and sexton fell sick. The very eve of the great day the environs were laid waste by a sort of hurricane — the church windows were broken, large trees were rooted up, and three huts were thrown down; but these obstacles, far from prejudicing the triumph of religion, served only to render it still more striking.

The catechumens having assembled in the chapel, which had been adorned with its most beautiful ornaments, and where they had been conducted for the more immediate preparations of their hearts prior to receiving the great sacrament of baptism, were so struck by the imposing appearance of the chapel, and the melodious sounds of the organ, now heard for the first time in the wilderness, that they were not able to express their admiration. The next day, with the exception of the time the Fathers took for their dinner, they were in church from eight o'clock in the morning until half past ten in the evening. How delightful it was to listen to the intelligent answers of the good savages to all the questions proposed to them. Never will those who were present forget the pious spirit of their replies. The rehabilitations of their marriages succeeded baptism, but not without great sacrifices on their part, because, until that time, the poor Indians had been ignorant of the unity and indissolubility of the conjugal tie. We could not help admiring the mighty effects of the sacrament of baptism in their souls. One poor husband hesitated as to which of his wives he should select. The oldest of them, perceiving his irresolution, said to him: " You know how much I love you, and I am also certain that you love me, but you cherish another more; she is younger than I am. Well, remain

with her; leave me our children, and in that manner we can all be baptized." I could cite many such traits.

[180] I will here begin the narrative of my journey to Colville. On the eve of my departure I informed the Flat Heads of my intentions. I requested them to procure some horses, and a small escort, in case I should meet with any of their enemies, the Black Feet. They brought to me seventeen horses, the number I had asked them; and ten young and brave warriors, who had already been often pierced with balls and arrows in different skirmishes, presented themselves to accompany me on my journey. With pleasure I bear testimony to their devotedness, their child-like simplicity and docility, politeness, complaisance and rare hilarity; but, above all, to their exemplary piety.

These good Flat Heads endeavored in every manner to divine and anticipate all my wants. On the afternoon of the 28th October, as I have already said, we commenced our march, and encamped at a distance of ten miles from St. Mary's. That day we met no one but a solitary hunter, who was carrying a buck, the half of which he offered to us, with great eagerness. This furnished us with an excellent supper, and a good breakfast for the next morning. The 29th, snow fell in large flakes, notwithstanding which we continued our march. We crossed, in the course of the day, a fine stream, without a name — the same one which the famous travellers, Lewis and Clarke, ascended in 1806, on their way to the section of country occupied by the tribe of the Pierced Noses, (or Sapetans.) I will call it the river of St. Francis Borgia.[167] Six miles further south we crossed the beautiful river of St. Ignatius. It enters the plain of the

[167] This affluent of the Bitterroot from the west was the one followed by the Lewis and Clark expedition, in their route across the Bitterroot mountain divide. Those explorers named it Traveller's Rest Creek; it is now known as the Lolo Fork of the Bitterroot. An affluent of Missoula River, some distance further down, has now taken the name that De Smet first applied to the Lolo Fork.— Ed.

Bitter Root,— which we shall henceforward call St. Mary's, — by a beautiful defile, commonly called, by the mountaineers or Canadian hunters, the Devil's Gate;[168] for what reason, however, I know not. These gentlemen have frequently on their lips the words [181] devil and hell; and it is perhaps on this account that we heard so often these appellations. Be not then alarmed when I tell you that I examined the Devil's pass, went through the Devil's gate, rowed on Satan's stream, and jumped from the Devil's horns. The "rake," one of the passes, the horns, and the stream, really deserve names that express something horrible — all three are exceedingly dangerous. The first and second, on account of the innumerable snags which fill their beds, as there are entire forests swallowed up by the river. The third pass of which I spoke, adds to the difficulties of the others a current still stronger. A canoe launched into this torrent flies over it with the speed of an arrow, and the most experienced pilot trembles in spite of himself. Twice did the brave Iroquois, who conducted our light canoe, exclaim: "Father, we are lost;" but a loud cry of "courage — take courage, John, confide in God, keep steady to the oar," saved us in that dangerous stream, drew us out from between the horns and threatening teeth of this awful " rake." But let us return to our account of the journey to Colville. We spread our skins on the borders of a little river at the foot of a high mountain, which we were to cross the next day, having traversed St. Mary's valley, a distance of about forty miles. This valley is from four to seven miles wide, and above two hundred long. It has but one fine defile, already mentioned, and which serves as the entrance to, and issue from, the valley. The mountains which terminate it on both sides appear to be inaccessible; they are piles of jagged rocks, the base of which presents

[168] Hell Gate, for which see *ante*, p. 269, note 139.— Ed.

nothing but fragments of the same description, while the Norwegian pine grows on those that are covered with earth, giving them a very sombre appearance, particularly in the autumn, in which season the snow begins to fall. They abound in [182] bucks, buffalos, and sheep, whose wool is as white as snow, and as fine as silk; also in all kinds of bears, wolves, panthers, carcasiux,[169] tiger cats, wild cats, and whistlers, a species of mountain rat. The moose is found here, but is very seldom caught, on account of its extraordinary vigilance, for, on the slightest rustling of a branch it leaves off eating, and will not return to its food for a long time afterwards. The soil of the valley is, with some few exceptions, very light; it contains, however, some good pastures. The whole course of the river is well lined with trees; especially with the pine, the fir, cotton, and willow trees.

Amongst the most remarkable birds we distinguished the Nun's eagle, (so called by travellers on account of the color of its head, which is white, whilst the other parts of the body are black,) the black eagle, buzzard, waterfowl, heron, crane, pheasant and quail. On the 30th we ascended a gap in the mountain. The two sides were very lofty, and studded with large pines, all the branches of which were covered with a black and very fine moss, that hung in festoons, or in the shape of mourning garlands, and added to the already funereal appearance of this pass. We here filed off by a little path, scarce worthy however of the name, for a distance of six miles. The road was filled with large blocks of stone and trunks of trees, placed as if it were on purpose to render the pass difficult and impracticable. The summit once attained, we proceeded to cross a smiling little plain, called the Camash Prairies, where the Flat Heads come every spring to dig up that nourishing root, which, together with

[169] The carcajou or wolverine (*Gulo luscus*).— Ed.

the game they are able to procure, forms their chief nourishment. We very soon descended the mountain in a zigzag direction, and reached a beautiful plain, which is watered by two rivers, the St. [183] Aloysius and St. Stanislaus.[170] They unite in this plain, whence they go to join the forks at Clark's, otherwise called the Flat Head river. This valley extends about ten miles. I perceived in this place one of those formidable Black Foot Indians in the act of hiding himself. I did not speak of it to my young companions, fearing that I might not be able to prevent a bloody struggle between them. I however took the precaution of having a good watch kept over our horses. The next day was Sunday, a day of rest. I celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and baptized three little children of the Pointed Hearts' tribe, whose parents had joined us on the road. The rest of the day was spent in prayer and instructions. The chief of our band twice addressed his companions, and spoke with much force and precision on the different portions of our religion, which he already had heard explained. The 1st of November — All Saints' Day — after having celebrated the Holy Sacrifice under a large poplar tree, we proceeded on our journey through a defile of about six miles. At the ford of the Great Clark's Fork, we met two encampments of the Kalispel tribe, who, having heard of our approach, had come thither to see us.[171] Men, women and

[170] The route usually taken by the Indians did not follow the main branch of the river, but crossed the divide between the Missoula and Jocko rivers, coming down into the valley of the Flathead, and proceeding along that to its outlet into Clark's Fork. The two streams named for the saints were the main Flathead and Jocko rivers, which unite in the prairie described by De Smet. There were a number of small prairies in the vicinity, known as Camas from the abundance of that root (*Camas esculenta*). The better-known Camas Prairie was twenty miles below the mouth of the Jocko; the one mentioned by De Smet was apparently higher up, near the divide of the two rivers. These should all be distinguished from the Camas Prairie (Quamash Flats) of Lewis and Clark, which lay west of the Bitterroot Mountains.— Ed.

[171] The Kalispel are the same tribe as the Pend d'Oreille, see *ante*, p. 141, note 8.— Ed.

children, ran to meet us, and pressed our hands with every demonstration of sincere joy. The chief of the first camp was called Chalax. I baptized twenty-four children in his little village, and one young woman, a Koetenaise, who was dying. The chief of the second camp was named Hoytelpo; his band occupied thirty huts. I spent the night amongst them; and, although they had never seen me before, they knew all the prayers that I had taught the Flat Heads on my first journey. The fact is, on hearing of my arrival in the mountains, they deputed an intelligent young man to meet me, and who was also gifted with a good [184] memory. Having learned the prayers and canticles, and such points as were most essential for salvation, he repeated to the village all that he had heard and seen. He had acquitted himself of his commission so well, and with so much zeal, that he gave instructions to his people during the course of the winter. The same desire for information concerning religion, had communicated itself to the other small camps, and with the same cheering success. It was, as you can easily imagine, a great consolation for me to hear prayers addressed to the great God, and his praises sung in a desert of about three hundred miles extent, where a Catholic priest had never been before. They were overjoyed when they heard that I hoped before long to be able to leave a Missionary amongst them. I cannot pass over in silence, a beautiful custom that is observed by these good people: Every evening, after prayers, the chief instructs his people, or gives them some salutary advice, to which they all listen with most profound attention, respect and modesty. To see them at their devotions one would be more apt to mistake them for perfectly religious men than savages. The next day, before my departure, I baptised twenty-seven children of the tribe. On that evening we alighted amongst fifteen huts

of the same nation, who received us with equal kindness.[172] Their chief had come several miles to meet me. He acknowledged frankly that having become acquainted with some American ministers, in the course of the summer — he had been told by them that my prayer (religion) was not a good one. "My heart is divided," said he, "and I do not know what to adhere to." I had no trouble in making him understand the difference between those gentlemen and priests, and the cause of their calumnious attacks against the only true church of Christ, which their ancestors [185] had abandoned. On the 3d of November, after prayers and instructions to the savages, we continued our march. We were on the borders of the Clarke Forks, to which we were obliged to keep close during eight days, whilst we descended the country bordering the stream. The river is at this place of a greenish blue, very transparent, caused probably by the deposit of a great quantity of oxigen of iron.[173] Our path during a great part of the day was on the declivity of a lofty, rocky mountain; we were here obliged to climb a steep rough pass from 400 to 600 feet high. I had before seen landscapes of awful grandeur, but this one certainly surpassed all others in horror. My courage failed at the first sight; it was impossible to remain on horseback, and on foot my weight of two hundred and eleven pounds, was no trifle. This, therefore, was the expedient to which I resorted: My mule Lizette was sufficiently docile and kind to allow me to grasp her tail, to which I held on firmly: crying at one moment aloud, and at other times making use of the whip to excite her courage, until the good beast conducted me safely to the very top of the mountain.—

---

[172] During the day (as described in Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, i, p. 347), the father had passed Camas Prairie and advanced through Horse Plain at the junction of Flathead and Clark's Fork.— Ed.

[173] Doubtless intended for oxide of iron.— Ed.

There I breathed freely for awhile, and contemplated the magnificent prospect that presented itself to my sight.

The windings of the river with the scenery on its banks were before me, on one side hung over our heads, rocks piled on rocks in the most precipitous manner, and on the other stood lofty peaks crowned with snow and pine trees: mountains of every shape and feature reared their towering forms before us. It really was a fine view and one which was well worth the effort we had made. On descending from this elevation I had to take new precautions. I preceded the mule, holding her by the bridle, while she moved cautiously down to the foot of the "Bad Rock," (as it is called by the savages,) as though she feared stumbling [186] and rolling with her master into the river which flowed beneath us. At this place Clarke's Fork runs through a narrow defile of rocky mountains; at times the soft murmurings of the waters charm the traveller, at others it spreads out and presents a calm surface clear as crystal. Wherever it is narrowed or intercepted by rocks it forms rapids, with falls and cascades; the noise of which, like that caused by a storm in the forest, is heard at a great distance. Nothing can be more diversified than this fine river.[174] There is in this vicinity a great variety of trees, bushes and different species of the tamarisk tree. The lichnis, a medicinal plant mentioned by Charlevoix in his history of Canada, grows here abundantly. We met in the course of that day with only one family, and that was of the Kalispel tribe. Whilst the women were rowing up the river their light canoe, made of the fir tree bark, which contained their children and all

---

[174] In *Explorations for a Pacific Railway, 1853-53* (*Senate Ex. Docs.*, 35 Cong., 2 sess., vol. xviii, p. 91) the valley is thus described: "The next sixty-five miles along the valley of Clark's Fork is over a difficult trail, there being places where the sharp rocks injured the animals;" again, "The valley is wide, arable, and inviting for settlement, although rather heavily wooded."— Ed.

the baggage, the men followed along the bank with their rifles or bows in their hands in pursuit of game.

On the 4th we entered a cedar and pine forest so dense that in its whole length we could scarcely see beyond the distance of twenty feet. Our beasts of burden suffered a great deal in it from the want of grass. We scarcely got through it after three day's march. It was a real labyrinth; from morning till night we did nothing but wind about to avoid thousands of trees, fallen either from fire, storms or age. On issuing from this forest we were charmed by an interesting prospect: Our view extended over the whole surface of the lake called "Pends-d'oreilles," studded with small islands covered with woods: over its inlets and the hills which overlook them, and which have for the most part their base on the borders of the lake and rise by gradual terraces or elevations until they reach the adjoining mountains, which are covered with perpetual snow. The [187] lake is about 30 miles long and from 4 to 7 wide.[175] At the head of it we traversed a forest, which is certainly a wonder of its kind; there is probably nothing similar to it in America. The savages speak of it as the finest in Oregon, and really every tree which it contains is enormous in its kind. The birch, elm and beech, generally small elsewhere, like the toad of La Fontaine, that aimed at being as large as the ox, swell out here to twice their size. They would fain rival the cedar, the Goliath of the forest, who, however, looking down with contempt upon his pitiful companions,

"Eleve aux cieux
Son front audacieux."
"Rears to heaven his audacious head."

[175] Lake Pend d'Oreille, in Kootenai County, Idaho, is one of the most picturesque bodies of fresh water in the Western states. It is irregular in shape, about sixty miles long, and from three to fifteen in breadth, with a shore line of nearly five hundred miles. It was probably, first of white men, visited by trappers and

The birch and beech at its side, resemble large candelabras placed around a massive column. Cedars, of four and five fathoms in circumference, are here very common; we saw some six, and I measured one forty-two feet in circumference. A cedar of four fathoms, lying on the ground, measured more than two hundred feet in length.[176] The delicate branches of these noble trees entwine themselves above the beech and elm; their fine, dense and ever-green foliage, forming an arch through which the sun's rays never penetrate; and this lofty vault, supported by thousands of columns, brought to the mind's eye, the idea of an immense, glorious temple, carpeted with the hardy evergreens that live and flourish best in the shade.

Before entering the forest we crossed a high mountain by a wild winding path. Its sides are covered with fine cedars and pines, which are, however, of smaller dimensions than those in the forest. Several times whilst ascending the mountain I found myself on parapets of rocks, whence, thanks to my safe-footed mule, I retired in safety. Once I [188] thought my career at an end. I had wandered from my companions, and following the path, I all at once came to a rocky projection which terminated in a point about two feet wide; before me was a perpendicular descent of three feet; on my left stood a rock as straight as a wall, and on my right yawned a precipice of about a thousand feet.— You can conceive that my situation was anything but pleasant. The slightest false step would have plunged the mule and his rider into the abyss beneath. To descend was impossible, as on one side I was closed in by the rock, and suspended over a dreadful chasm on the other. My

---

traders of the Hudson's Bay Company. It is now crossed by the Northern Pacific Railway, and steamers ply upon its waters.— Ed.

[176] This is the Oregon cedar (*Thuya gigantea*), which attains great size and is widely diffused on the trans-Rocky region.— Ed.

mule had stopped at the commencement of the descent, and not having any time to lose, I recommended myself to God, and as a last expedient sunk my spurs deeply into the sides of my poor beast; she made one bold leap and safely landed me on another parapet much larger than that I had left.

The history of the fine forest, and my leap from the dangerous rock, will be treated with incredulity by many of your acquaintance. If so, tell them that I invite them to visit both these places: "Venite et videte." I promise them before hand that they will admire with me the wonders of nature. They will have, like me, their moments of admiration and of fear. I cannot pass over in silence the pleasant meeting I had in the depth of the forest. I discovered a little hut of rushes, situated on the banks of the river. Raising my voice to its highest pitch, I tried to make its inhabitants hear me, but received no answer. I felt an irresistible desire to visit it, and accordingly made my interpreter accompany me. We found it occupied by a poor old woman, who was blind, and very ill. I spoke to her of the Great Spirit, of the most essential dogmas of our faith, and of baptism. The example of the Apostle St. [189] Philip teaches us that there are cases when all the requisite dispositions may entirely consist in an act of faith, and in the sincere desire to enter Heaven by the right path. All the answers of the poor old woman were respectful, and breathing the love of God. "Yes," she would say, "I love the Great Spirit with my whole heart; all my life he has been very kind to me. Yes, I wish to be His child, I want to be His forever." And immediately she fell on her knees, and begged me to give her baptism. I named her Mary, and placed around her neck the miraculous medal of the Blessed Virgin. After leaving her, I overheard her thanking God for this fortunate adventure. I had scarcely regained the path, when I met her husband, almost bent

to the earth by age and infirmity; he could hardly drag himself along. He had been setting a trap in the forest for the bucks. The Flat Heads who had preceded me, had told him of my arrival. As soon, therefore, as he perceived me, he began to cry out, with a trembling voice: "Oh how delighted I am to see our Father before I die. The Great Spirit is good — oh how happy my heart is." And the venerable old man pressed my hand most affectionately, repeating again and again the same expressions. Tears fell from my eyes on witnessing such affection. I told him that I had just left his hut, and had baptized his wife. "I heard," said he, "of your arrival in our mountains, and of your baptizing many of our people. I am poor and old; I had hardly dared to hope for the happiness of seeing you. Black-gown, make me as happy as you have made my wife. I wish also to belong to God, and we will always love Him." I conducted him to the borders of a stream that flowed near us, and after a brief instruction, I administered to him the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, naming him Simon. On seeing me depart, he repeated, impressively: [190] "Oh how good is the Great Spirit. I thank you, Skylax, (Black-gown) for the favor you have conferred on me. Oh how happy is my heart. Yes, I will always love the Great Spirit. Oh how good the Great Spirit is; how good He is." During that same journey, I discovered in a little hut of bulrushes, five old men, who appeared to be fourscore years old. Three of them were blind, and the other two had but one eye each; they were almost naked, and offered a real personification of human misery. I spoke to them for a considerable time on the means of salvation, and on the bliss of another world. Their answers edified me much, and affected me even to tears; they were replete with the love of God, a desire of doing right, and of dying well. You might have heard these good old men crying out from

different parts of the hut, forming together a touching chorus, to which I sincerely wished that all the children of St. Ignatius could have listened. "Oh Great Spirit, what a happiness is coming to us in our old days! We will love you, O Great Spirit. *Le-mele Kaikolinzoeten; one le-mele eltelill.* We will love you, O Great Spirit. Yes, we will love you until death." When we explained to them the necessity of baptism, they demanded it earnestly, and knelt down to receive it. I have not found as yet amongst these Indians, I will not say opposition, but not even coldness or indifference. These little adventures are our great consolation. I would not have exchanged my situation, at that moment, for any other on earth. I was convinced that such incidents alone were worth a journey to the mountains. Ah, good and dear Fathers, who may read these lines, I conjure you, through the mercy of our Divine Redeemer, not to hesitate entering this vineyard; its harvest is ripe and abundant. Does not our Saviour tell us: "Ignem veni mittere in terram et quid volo nisi ut accendatur." [191] It is amidst the poor tribes of these isolated mountains that the fire of divine grace burns with ardor. Superstitious practices have disappeared; nor have they amongst them the castes of East India. Speak to these Savages of heavenly things; at once their hearts are inflamed with divine love; and immediately they go seriously about the great affair of their salvation. Day and night they are at our sides, insatiable for the "Bread of Life." Often, on retiring, we hear them say, "Our sins, no doubt, rendered us so long unworthy to hear these consoling words." As to privations and dangers, the Oregon Missionaries must expect them, for they will certainly meet them, but in a good cause. Sometimes they will be obliged to fast, but a better appetite will be their reward. Their escapes from the many dangers of the road, or from enemies always on the alert, teach them to confide

in God alone, and ever to keep their accounts in order. I here feel the full application of that consoling text of the Scripture: "My yoke is sweet, and my burden is light." At the last day it will be manifest that the holy name of Jesus has performed wonders amongst these poor people. Their eagerness to hear the glad tidings of salvation is certainly at its height. They came from all parts, and from great distances, to meet me on my way, and presented all their young children and dying relatives for baptism. Many followed me for whole days, with the sole desire of receiving instructions. Really our hearts bled at the sight of so many souls who are lost for the want of religion's divine and saving assistance. Here again may we cry out with the Scripture: "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few." What Father is there in the Society whose zeal will not be enkindled on hearing these details? And where is the Christian who would refuse his mite to such [192] a work as that of the "Propagation of the Faith?" that precious pearl of the Church, which procures salvation to so many souls, who otherwise would perish unaided and forever. During my journey, which lasted forty-two days, I baptized 190 persons, of whom 26 were adults, sick, or in extreme old age; I preached to more than two thousand Indians; who thus evidently conducted into my way by Providence, will not, I trust, tarry long in ranging themselves under the banner of Jesus Christ. With the assistance of my catechists, the Flat Heads, who were as yet but catechumens, the conversion of the Kalispel tribe was so far advanced that when the time came round for the winter's hunting, the Rev. Father Point enjoyed the consolation of seeing them join the Flat Head tribe, with the sole desire of profiting by the Missionary's presence. This gave him an opportunity to instruct and baptise a great number on the Purification and on the Feasts of the Canonization of St. Ignatius and St.

Apparition

Francis Xavier. On my return, the 8th of December,[177] I continued instructing those of the Flat Heads who had not been baptized. On Christmas day I added 150 new baptisms to those of the 3d of December, and 32 rehabilitations of marriage; so that the Flat Heads, some sooner and others later, but all, with very few exceptions, had, in the space of three months, complied with every thing necessary to merit the glorious title of true children of God. Accordingly on Christmas eve, a few hours before the midnight Mass, the village of St. Mary was deemed worthy of a special mark of heaven's favour: The Blessed Virgin appeared to a little orphan boy named Paul, in the hut of an aged and truly pious woman.— The youth, piety and sincerity of this child, joined to the nature of the fact which he related, forbade us to doubt the truth of his statement. The following is what he recounted [193] to me with his own innocent lips: "Upon entering John's hut, whither I had gone to learn my prayers, which I did not know, I saw some one who was very beautiful — her feet did not touch the earth, her garments were as white as snow; she had a star over her head, a serpent under her feet; and near the serpent was a fruit which I did not recognise. I could see her heart, from which rays of light burst forth and shone upon me. When I first beheld all this I was frightened, but afterwards my fear left me; my heart was warmed, my mind clear, and I do not know how it happened, but all at once I knew my prayers." (To be brief I omit several circumstances.)

[177] The original French text of the letter describing this journey will be found in *Voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses* (Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, i, pp. 354-358); it gives additional information regarding the remainder of the journey. Having arrived at Lake Pend d'Oreille on November 1, the traveller was three days passing the traverse; November 13 a high mountain was crossed, and by pushing ahead, one more long day's journey brought him to Fort Colville, where he was hospitably entertained by the Hudson's Bay factor. The return journey was without incident.— Ed.

He ended his account by saying that several times the same person had appeared to him whilst he was sleeping; and that once she had told him she was pleased, that the first village of the Flat Heads should be called "St. Mary." The child had never seen or heard before any thing of the kind; he did not even know if the person was a man or woman, because the appearance of the dress which she wore was entirely unknown to him. Several persons having interrogated the child on this subject, have found him unvarying in his answers. He continues by his conduct to be the angel of his tribe.

On the 23d of December, Father Point, at the head of the inhabitants of forty lodges, started for the buffalo hunt.—On the road they met with huntsmen of five or six different tribes, some of whom followed him to the termination of the chase, from the desire of learning their prayers. The Flat Heads having prolonged their stay at St. Mary's as long as they possibly could, so as not to depart without receiving baptism, experienced such a famine, the first weeks of January, that their poor dogs, having not even a bone to gnaw, devoured the very straps of leather with which they tied their horses during the night. The cold moreover was [194] so uninterruptedly severe that during the hunting season, which lasted three months, such a quantity of snow fell that many were attacked with a painful blindness, vulgarly called "snow disease." One day when the wind was very high, and the snow falling and freezing harder than usual, Father Point became suddenly very pale, and would no doubt have been frozen to death, in the midst of the plain, had not some travellers, perceiving the change in his countenance, kindled a large fire. But neither the wind, ice, or famine, prevented the zealous Flat Heads from performing on this journey all they were accustomed to do at St. Mary's. Every morning and evening they assembled around

the Missionary's lodge, and more than three-fourths of them without any shelter than the sky, after having recited their prayers, listened to an instruction, preceded and followed by hymns. At day-break and sunset the bell was tolled three times for the Angelical Salutation. The Sunday was religiously kept; an observance which was so acceptable to God, that once especially it was recompensed in a very visible manner. The following is what I read in the Journal kept by Father Point during the winter's hunt.

Sixth February.— To-day, Sunday, a very high wind, the sky greyish, and the thermometer at the freezing point; no grass for the horses; the buffalos driven off by the Pierced Noses. The 7th, the cold more piercing — food for our horses still scarcer — the snow increasing; but yesterday was a time of perfect rest, and the fruits of it show themselves to-day in perfect resignation and confidence. At noon we reached the summit of a mountain, and what a change awaits us. The sun shines, the cold has lost its intensity; we have in view an immense plain, and in that plain good pasturages, which are clouded with buffalos. The encampment stops, the hunters assemble, and before [195] sunset 155 buffalos have fallen by their arrows. One must confess that if this hunt were *not* miraculous, it bears a great resemblance to the draught of fishes made by Peter when casting his net at the word of the Lord, he drew up 153 fishes.— St. John, xxi. 11. The Flat Heads confided in the Lord, and were equally successful in killing 153 buffalos. What a fine draught of fishes! but what a glorious hunt of buffalos! Represent to yourself an immense amphitheatre of mountains, the least of which exceeds in height Mont Martre,[178] and in the midst of this majestic

[178] Montmartre is the highest point in the city of Paris, three hundred and thirty feet above the Seine, and dominates the entire city. In recent years a large church has been built upon its summit.— Ed.

enclosure a plain more extensive than that of Paris, and on this magnificent plain a multitude of animals, the least of which surpasses in size the largest ox in Europe. Such was the park in which our Indians hunted. Wishing to pursue them, continues Father Point, in his journal, I urged on my horse to a herd of fugitives, and as he was fresh, I had no difficulty in getting up to them. I even succeeded in compelling the foremost to abandon his post, but enraged, he stopped short, and presented such a terrible front, that I thought it more prudent to open a passage and let him escape. I acted wisely, as on the same day, one of these animals, in his fall, overturned a horse and his rider. Fortunately, however, the latter was more dexterous than I should have been in such a perilous situation; he aimed his blows so promptly and well, that of the three who were thrown, only two arose. On another occasion, a hunter who had been also dismounted, had no other means to avoid being torn to pieces than to seize hold of the animal by the horns just at the time he was about to trample him to death. A third hunter, fleeing at all speed, felt himself stopped by the plaited tail of his horse hooked on the buffalo's horn; but both fearing a trap, made every effort to disengage themselves. The buffalo hunt is attended with [196] dangers, but the greatest of these does not consist in the mere pursuit of the animal, but proceeds rather from the bands of Black Feet who constantly lurk in these regions, especially when there is some prospect of meeting with the larger game, or stealing a number of horses. Of all the mountain savages the Black Feet are the most numerous, wicked, and the greatest thieves. Happily, however, from having been often beaten by the smaller tribes, they have become so dastardly, that unless they are twenty to one, they confine their attacks to the horses, which, thanks to the carelessness of their courageous enemies, they go about

with so much dexterity and success, that this year, while our good Flat Heads were asleep, they discovered their animals as often as twenty times, and carried off more than one hundred of them. During the winter, about twenty of these gentlemen visited the Flat Heads in the day time, and without stealing any thing, but in this manner. There resided in the camp an old chief of the Black Feet tribe, who had been baptised on Christmas day, and named Nicholas; this good savage, knowing that the Missionary would willingly hold an interview with his brethren, undertook himself to harangue them during the night, and so well did he acquit himself, that upon the calumet's being planted on the limits of the camp, and the messenger being admitted to an audience, singing was heard in the neighboring mountains, and soon after a band of these brigands issued, armed as warriors, from the gloomy defile. They were received as friends, and four of the principals were ushered into the Missionary's lodge; they smoked the calumet and discussed the news of the day. The Missionary spoke of the necessity of prayer, to which subject they listened most attentively; nor did they manifest either surprise or repugnance. They told him that there had arrived [197] recently in one of their forests a man who was not married, and who wore on his breast a large crucifix, read every day in a big book, and made the sign of the cross before eating any thing; and in fine, that he was dressed exactly like the Black-gowns at St. Mary's. The Father did every thing in his power to gain their good will — after which, they were conducted to the best lodge in the encampment. It certainly would seem that such hosts were worthy of better guests. However, towards the middle of the night, the explosion of fire arms was heard. It was soon discovered that a Flat Head was firing at a Black Foot, just as the latter was leaving the camp, taking with him four

horses.— Fortunately, the robber was not one of the band that had been received within the encampment, which, upon being proved, far from creating any suspicion, on the contrary, had the effect of their kindly offering them a grave for the unfortunate man. But whether they wished to appear to disapprove of the deed, or that they anticipated dangers from reprisals, they left the wolves to bury the body, and took their departure. Good Nicholas, the orator, joined them, in order to render the same services to the others that he had to these. He went off, promising to return soon with the evidences of his success. He has not been seen as yet, but we are informed, he and his companions have spoken so favorably of prayer, and the Black-gowns, that already the Sunday is religiously observed in the camp where Nicholas resides, and that a great chief, with the people of sixty lodges, intend shortly to make our acquaintance, and attach themselves to the Flat Heads. In the meanwhile, divine justice is punishing rigorously a number of their robbers. This year, the Pierced Noses caught twelve of them in flagrant faults, and killed them. About the time that the Black Foot above mentioned met his fate at [198] the hands of a Flat Head, thirty others were receiving the reward due to their crimes, from the Pends-d'oreilles tribe. A very remarkable fact in this last encounter is, that of the four who commenced, and the others who finished it, not one fell; although, in order to break in on the delinquents, who were retrenched behind a kind of rampart, they were obliged to expose themselves to a brisk fire. I saw the field of combat some time afterwards. Of the thirty robbers who had been slain, only five or six heads remained, and those so disfigured as to lead one to think that an age had already elapsed since their death.

Two years before, the same tribe, (Pends-d'oreilles) assisted by the Flat Heads, making in all a band of seventy

men, stood an attack of fifteen hundred Black Feet, whom they defeated, killing in five days, during which time the battle lasted, fifty of their foes, without losing a single man on their side. They would not commence the attack until they had recited their prayers on their knees. A few days ago, the spot was pointed out to me where six Flat Heads withstood 160 Black Feet with so much resolution, that with a handful of their men who came to their aid, they gained the victory. The most perfidious nation, after the Black Feet, is the Banac tribe; they also bear the Flat Heads much ill will. It has happened more than once that at the very moment the Banac tribe were receiving the greatest proofs of friendship from the Flat Heads, the former were plotting their ruin. Of this you have already had one proof, but here is another. One day a detachment of two hundred Banacs visited the camp of the Flat Heads, and after smoking with them returned to their encampment. The small number of the Flat Heads had not, however, escaped their notice, and they determined to take advantage of their apparent weakness. Accordingly, they [199] retraced their steps that very night to execute their base designs. But the chief, named Michael, having been advised of their intention, assembled in haste his twenty warriors, and after entreating them to confide in God, he rushed on these traitors so happily and vigorously, that at the first shock they were routed. Already nine of the fugitives had fallen, and most of the others would have shared the same fate if Michael, in the very heat of the pursuit, had not recollected that it was Sunday, and on that account stopped his brave companions, saying: "My friends, it is now the time for prayer; we must retire to our camp." It is by these and similar exploits, wherein the finger of God is visible, that the Flat Heads have acquired such a reputation for valor, that notwithstanding their inferior

numbers, they are feared much more than they on their side dread their bitterest enemies. These victories however cannot but be fatal even to the conquerors; hence we will strive to inspire all with the love of peace, which may be accomplished if each party remains at home. For this purpose we must create among them a greater taste for agriculture than for hunting. But how can we compass this unless the same measures are employed for the missions of the Rocky Mountains that were so happily adopted for Paraguay. If the true friends of Religion only knew of what the Indians who surround us are capable when once converted, I can not doubt but that they would assist us in our efforts to accomplish so beautiful, so advantageous a project. It is, moreover, through the Iroquois of the North, whose cruelty formerly exceeded that of the Black Feet, that the knowledge of the true God came to the Flat Heads, and awakened amongst them the desire of possessing the Black-gowns. We have seen to what dangers the good Flat Heads exposed themselves to obtain Missionaries, [200] and what sacrifices they have made to merit the title of children of God; and now what is their actual progress? In their village, enmities, quarrels and calumnies, are unknown; they are sincere and upright amongst themselves, and full of confidence in their Missionaries. They carry this to such a degree that they place implicit reliance on their veracity, and cannot suppose that they have any thing else in view but their happiness; they have no difficulty in believing the mysteries of our faith, or in approaching the tribunal of penance: difficulties which appear insurmountable to the pride and cowardice of many civilized christians. The first time they were asked if they believed firmly in all that was contained in the Apostles' creed, they answered, "Yes — very much." When they were spoken to about confession, some wished it to be public.— This

will explain to you how it happened that before we resided three months amongst them we were enabled to baptize all the adults, and four months later to admit a large number to frequent communion. There are whole families who never let a Sunday go by without approaching the holy table. Often twenty confessions are heard consecutively without their being matter for absolution. This year we performed the devotion of the month of Mary, and I can flatter myself that the exercises were attended with as much piety and edification as in the most devout parishes of Europe. At the end of the month a statue was borne in triumph to the very place where our Blessed Mother designed to honor us with the aforementioned apparition.— Since that day a sort of pilgrimage has been established there, under the name of "Our Lady of Prayer." None pass the pious monument without stopping to pray on their knees; the more devout come regularly twice a day to speak to their Mother and her divine Son, and the children [201] add to their prayers the most beautiful flowers they can cull in the prairies.

On the Feast of the Sacred Heart we made use of this monument, decorated with garlands of flowers, as a repository, and our people received for the first time, the benediction of the blessed sacrament; a happiness which they now enjoy every Sunday after vespers. Some of them already understand the nature of the devotion of the Sacred Heart. To propagate it we have laid the foundations of several societies, of which all the most virtuous men, women and young people have become members. Victor, the great chief, is prefect of one of these associations, and Agnes his wife is president of another. They were not elected through any deference for their dignity or birth, but solely on account of their great personal merits.[179] A fact which

[179] Victor, hereditary chief of the Flatheads, succeeded Paul (or Big Face) in

proves that the *Flat Heads* regard merit more than rank, is, that the place of great chief becoming vacant by the death of Peter, they chose for his successor the chief of the men's society, and for no other reason did he obtain this high dignity than for the noble qualities, both of heart and head, which they all thought he possessed. Every night and morning, when all is quiet in the camp, he harangues the people; the subject of his discourse being principally a repetition of what the Black Gowns have said before. This good chief walks faithfully in the footsteps of his predecessor, which is no slight praise. This last, who was baptized at the age of 80, and admitted to communion in his 82d year, was the first to deserve this double favour, more on account of his virtue than his years. The day of his baptism he said to me, "If during my life I have committed faults they were those of ignorance; it appears to me that I never did any thing, knowing it to be wrong." At the time of his first communion, which preceded his death but [202] a few days, having been asked if he had not some faults with which to reproach himself since his baptism — "Faults," he replied, with surprise, "how could I ever commit any, I whose duty it is to teach others how to do good?" He was buried in the red drapery he was accustomed to hang out on Sunday to announce that it was the day of the Lord. Alphonsus, in the prime of youth, soon followed him. He said to me on the day of his baptism: "I dread so much offending again the Great Spirit, that I beg of him to grant me the grace to die soon." He fell sick a few days afterwards and expired with the most

---

that office, which he retained with dignity and ability until his death in 1870, when he was in turn succeeded by his son Charlot. He was a consistent friend of the whites, many of the early pioneers of Montana testifying to his kindness and integrity. His wife Agnes remembered the coming of Lewis and Clark to their country; see O. D. Wheeler, *On the Trail of Lewis and Clark* (New York), ii, p. 65.— Ed.

Christian dispositions, thanking God for having granted his prayer. In the hope of their glorious resurrection, their mortal remains have been deposited at the foot of the large cross.

Of twenty persons who died within the year, we have no reason to fear for the salvation of one.

Not having been able this year to obtain either provisions or sufficient clothes to supply the wants of our mission, I started for Fort Vancouver, the great mart of the honorable Hudson Bay Company, and distant about one thousand miles from our establishment. The continuation of this narrative will show you that this necessary journey was providential. I found myself during this trip a second time amongst the Kalispel tribe.

They continue with much fervour to assemble every morning and evening to recite prayers in common, and manifest the same attention and assiduity in listening to our instructions. The chiefs on their side are incessant in exhorting the people to the practice of every good work. The two principal obstacles that prevent a great number from receiving baptism, are — first, the plurality of wives; many have not the courage to separate themselves from those, by whom they have children. The second is their [203] fondness for gambling, in which they risk every thing. I baptized 60 adults amongst them during this last journey.

Crossing a beautiful plain near the Clarke or Flat Head river, called the Horse prairie, I heard that there were 30 lodges of the Skalzy or Kœtenay tribe, at about two day's journey from us.[180] I determined whilst awaiting the descent

[180] For Horse Prairie (plain) see *ante*, p. 336, note 172. For the Kutenai see Ross's *Oregon Settlers*, in our volume vii, p. 211, note 73. In addition, note that the Kutenai (also called Skalzi) are a distinct linguistic stock, known as Kitunahan. Their habitat was chiefly in British territory; but because of alliance with the Flathead and other Salishan tribes they frequently wandered southward. A few are still on the Flathead reservation in Montana; but about five hundred and

of the skiff, which could only start six days later, to pay them a visit, for they had never seen a priest in their lands before. Two half breeds served as my guides and escorts on this occasion. We gallopped and trotted all the day, travelling a distance of 60 miles. We spent a quiet night in a deep defile, stretched near a good fire, but in the open air. The next day, (April 14) after having traversed several mountains and valleys, where our horses were up to their knees in snow, we arrived about 3 o'clock in sight of the Kœtenay camp. They assembled immediately on my approach; when I was about twenty yards from them, the warriors presented their arms, which they had hidden until then under their buffalo robes. They fired a general salute which frightened my mule and made her rear and prance to the great amusement of the savages. They then defiled before me, giving their hands in token of friendship and congratulation. I observed that each one lifted his hand to his forehead after having presented it to me. I soon convoked the council in order to inform them of the object of my visit. They unanimously declared themselves in favour of my religion, and adopted the beautiful custom of their neighbours, the Flat Heads, to meet night and morning for prayers in common. I assembled them that very evening for this object and gave them a long instruction on the principal dogmas of our faith. The next day, I baptized all their little children and nine of their adults, previously instructed, amongst whom was the wife of an Iroquois,[204] who had resided for thirty years with this tribe. The Iroquois and a Canadian occupy themselves in the absence of a priest in instructing them. My visit could not be long. I left the Kœtenay village about 12 o'clock, accompanied by twelve of these warriors and some half-blood Crees,

fifty frequent the Kutenai agency in British Columbia. They are nearly all Catholics.— Ed.

whom I had baptized in 1840. They wished to escort me to the entrance of the large Flat Head lake,[181] with the desire of giving me a farewell feast; a real banquet of all the good things their country produced. The warriors had gone on ahead and dispersed in every direction, some to hunt and others to fish. The latter only succeeded in catching a single trout. The warriors returned in the evening with a bear, goose, and six swan's eggs. "Sed quid hoc inter tantos." The fish and goose were roasted before a good fire, and the whole mess was soon presented to me. Most of my companions preferring to fast, I expressed my regret at it, consoling them however by telling them that God would certainly reward their kindness to me. A moment after we heard the last hunter returning, whom we thought had gone back to the camp. Hope shone on every countenance. The warrior soon appeared laden with a large elk, and hunger that night was banished from the camp. Each one began to occupy himself; some cut up the animal, others heaped fuel on the fire, and prepared sticks and spits to roast the meat. The feast which had commenced under such poor auspices continued a great part of the night. The whole animal, excepting a small piece that was reserved for my breakfast, had disappeared before they retired to sleep. This is a sample of savage life. The Indian when he has nothing to eat does not complain, but in the midst of abundance he knows no moderation. The stomach of a savage has always been to me a riddle.

The plain that commands a view of the lake is one of the [205] most fertile in the mountainous regions. The Flat Head river runs through it and extends more than 200 miles to the North East. It is wide and deep, abounding

[181] Flathead Lake is a broadening of the river of that name, and lies northeast of the present Flathead reservation. It is about twenty-eight miles long, with an average breadth of ten, and is studded with beautiful islands.— Ed.

with fish and lined with wood, principally with the cotton, aspen, pine and birch. There are beautiful sites for villages, but the vicinity of the Black Feet must delay for a long while the good work, as they are only at two day's march from the great district occupied by these brigands, from whence they often issue to pay their neighbours predatory visits. A second obstacle would be the great distance from any post of the Hudson Bay Company; consequently the difficulty of procuring what is strictly necessary. The lake is highly romantic, and is from 40 to 50 miles long. Mountainous and rocky islands of all sizes are scattered over its bosom, which present an enchanting prospect. These islands are filled with wild horses. Lofty mountains surround the lake and rise from its very brink.

On the 16th of April, after bidding adieu to my travelling companions, I started early in the morning, accompanied by two Canadians and two savages. That evening we encamped close to a delightful spring, which was warm and sulphurous;[182] having travelled a distance of about fifty miles. When the savages reach this spring they generally bathe in it. They told me that after the fatigues of a long journey they find that bathing in this water greatly refreshes them. I found here ten lodges of the Kalispel tribe; the chief, who was by birth of the Pierced Nose tribe, invited me to spend the night in his wigwam, where he treated me most hospitably. This was the only small Kalispel camp that I had as yet met in my journeys. I here established, as I have done wherever I stopped, the custom of morning and evening prayers. During the evening the chief who had looked very gloomy, made a public exposition of [206] his whole life. "Black Gown," said he, "you find your-

[182] This hot spring is in the eastern part of the Flathead reservation, and by a small creek discharges into the Little Bitterroot River, an affluent of the Flathead.— Ed.

self in the lodge of a most wicked and unhappy man; all the evil that a man could do on earth, I believe I have been guilty of: I have even assassinated several of my near relations; since then, there is nought in my heart but trouble, bitterness and remorse. Why does not the Great Spirit annihilate me? I still possess life, but there will be neither pardon nor mercy for me after death." These words and the feeling manner with which they were addressed to me drew tears of compassion from my eyes. "Poor, unfortunate man," I replied, "you are really to be pitied, but you increase your misery by thinking that you cannot obtain pardon. The devil, man's evil spirit, is the author of this bad thought. Do not listen to him, for he would wish to precipitate you into that bad place (hell). The Great Spirit who created you is a Father infinitely good and merciful. He does not desire the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. He receives us into his favour and forgets our crimes, notwithstanding their number and enormity, the moment we return to Him contrite and repentant. He will also forgive you if you walk in the path which His only Son, Jesus Christ, came on earth to trace for us." I then recounted the instance of the good thief and the parable of the prodigal son. I made him sensible of the proof of God's goodness in sending me to him. I added that perhaps his life was drawing to a close, and that he might be in danger of falling into the bad place on account of his sins; that I would show him the right path, which if he followed he would certainly reach Heaven. These few words were as balm poured on his wounded spirit. He became calmer, and joy and hope appeared on his countenance. "Black Gown," said he, "your words re-animate me: I see, I understand better now, you have [207] consoled me, you have relieved me from a burden that was crushing me with its weight, for I thought myself lost.

I will follow your directions; I will learn how to pray. Yes, I feel convinced that the Great Spirit will have pity on me." There was fortunately in the camp a young man who knew all the prayers, and was willing to serve as his catechist. His baptism was deferred until the autumn or winter.

The results of my visit to the Pointed Hearts were very consoling. They form a small but interesting tribe, animated with much fervour.

As soon as they were certain of my visit, they deputed couriers in every direction to inform the savages of the approach of the Black-gown; and all, without exception, assembled at the outlet of the great lake which bears their name, and which was the place I had indicated.[183] An ingenuous joy, joined to wonder and contentment, shone on every face when they saw me arrive in the midst of them. Every one hastened to greet me. It was the first visit of the kind they had received, and the following is the order they observed. Their chiefs and old men marched at the head; next came the young men and boys; then followed the women — mothers, young girls, and little children. I was conducted in triumph by this multitude to the lodge of the great chief. Here, as every where else in the Indian country, the everlasting calumet was first produced, which went round two or three times in the most profound silence. The chief then addressed me, saying: "Black-gown you are most welcome amongst us. We thank you for your charity towards us. For a long time we have wished to see you, and hear the words which will give us understanding. Our fathers invoked the sun and earth. I recollect very well when the knowledge

[183] For this lake see our volume vii, p. 211, note 75. Father de Smet crossed the mountains from Missoula Valley by the route now followed by the Northern Pacific Railway along the stream which he had christened St. Regis Borgia, through St. Regis Pass, coming out upon the headwaters of Cœur d'Aléne River, which he followed to the lake of that name.— Ed.

of the true and one God came amongst them; since which time we have offered [208] to Him our prayers and vows. We are however to be pitied. We do not know the word of the Great Spirit. All is darkness as yet to us, but to-day I hope we shall see the light shine. Speak, Black-gown, I have done — every one is anxious to hear you." I spoke to them for two hours on salvation and end of man's creation, and not one person stirred from his place the whole time of the instruction. As it was almost sunset, I recited the prayers that I had translated into their language a few days before. After which I took some refreshments, consisting of fragments of dried meat, and a piece of cooked moss, tasting like soap, and as black as pitch. All this however was as grateful to my palate as though it had been honey and sugar, not having eaten a mouthful since day-break. At their own request I then continued instructing the chiefs and their people until the night was far advanced. About every half hour I paused, and then the pipes would pass around to refresh the listeners and give time for reflection. It was during these intervals that the chiefs conversed on what they had heard, and instructed and advised their followers. On awakening the next morning, I was surprised to find my lodge already filled with people. They had entered so quietly that I had not heard them. It was hardly day-break when I arose, and they all following my example, placed themselves on their knees, and we made together the offering of our hearts to God, with that of the actions of the day. After this the Chief said: "Black-gown, we come here very early to observe you — we wish to imitate what you do. Your prayer is good; we wish to adopt it. But you will leave us after two nights more, and we have no one to teach us in your absence." I had the bell rung for morning prayers, promising him at the same time that the prayers should be

known before I left them. [209] After a long instruction on the most important truths of religion, I collected around me all the little children, with the young boys and girls; I chose two from among the latter, to whom I taught the Hail Mary, assigning to each one his own particular part; then seven for the Our Father; ten others for the Commandments, and twelve for the Apostles' Creed. This method, which was my first trial of it, succeeded admirably. I repeated to each one his part until he knew it perfectly; I then made him repeat it five or six times. These little Indians, forming a triangle, resembled a choir of angels, and recited their prayers, to the great astonishment and satisfaction of the savages. They continued in this manner morning and night, until one of the chiefs learned all the prayers, which he then repeated in public. I spent three days in instructing them. I would have remained longer, but the savages were without provisions. There was scarcely enough for one person in the whole camp. My own provisions were nearly out, and I was still four days' journey from Fort Colville. The second day of my stay among them, I baptized all their small children, and then twenty-four adults, who were infirm and very old. It appeared as though God had retained these good old people on earth to grant them the inexpressible happiness of receiving the sacrament of baptism before their death. They seemed by their transports of joy and gratitude at this moment, to express that sentiment of the Scripture: "My soul is ready, O God, my soul is ready." Never did I experience in my visits to the savages so much satisfaction as on this occasion, not even when I visited the Flat Heads in 1840; nor have I elsewhere seen more convincing proofs of sincere conversion to God. May He grant them to persevere in their virtuous resolutions. Rev. Father Point intends

passing the winter [210] with them to confirm them in their faith.[184] After some advice and salutary regulations, I left this interesting colony, and I must acknowledge, with heartfelt regret. The great chief allowed himself scarcely a moment's repose for three nights I spent amongst them; he would rise from time to time to harangue the people, and repeat to them all he was able to remember of the instructions of the day. During the whole time of my mission, he continued at my side, so anxious was he not to lose a single word. The old chief, now in his eightieth year, was baptized by the name of Jesse. In the spring the territory of this tribe enchants the traveller who may happen to traverse it. It is so diversified with noble plains, and enamelled with flowers, whose various forms and colors offer to experienced botanists an interesting *parterre*. These plains are surrounded by magnificent forests of pine, fir and cedar. To the west their country is open, and the view extends over several days' journey. To the south, east and north, you see towering mountains, ridge rising above ridge, robed with snow, and mingling their summits with the clouds, from which, at a distance, you can hardly distinguish them. The lake forms a striking feature in this beautiful prospect, and is about thirty miles in circumference. It is deep, and abounds in fish, particularly in salmon trout, common trout, carp, and a small, oily fish, very delicious, and tasting like the smelt. The Spokan river rises in the lake, and crosses the whole plain of the Cœur d'Alenes. The valley

[184] The mission founded by Father Point in November, 1842, known as the Sacred Heart, was successful. The site was first upon St. Joseph River, a feeder of Cœur d'Alène Lake; but in 1846 it was removed to Cœur d'Alène River, at the present Cataldo. There the first church was built by the neophytes in 1853, after designs by Father Ravalli; it is still a landmark of the region. The tribesmen had been taught agriculture, and lived chiefly in log houses; but the soil being sterile, the mission was again removed to the upper waters of Haugman's Creek, in Idaho, where the Cœur d'Alène still reside upon their reservation.— Ed.

that borders above the lake is from four to five miles wide, exceedingly fertile, and the soil from ten to fifteen feet deep. Every spring, at the melting of the snow, it is subject to inundations, which scarcely ever last longer than four or five days; at the same time augmenting, as in Egypt, the fertility of the soil. The potatoe grows here very well, and in great abundance. [211] The Spokan river is wide, swift and deep in the spring, and contains, like all the rivers of Oregon, many rapid falls and cascades.[185] The navigation of the waters of this immense territory is generally dangerous, and few risk themselves on them without being accompanied by experienced pilots. In descending Clark's river, we passed by some truly perilous and remarkable places, where the pilots have full opportunity to exhibit their dexterity and prudence. The rapids are numerous, and the roar of the waters incessant, the current sweeping on at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour; the rugged banks and projecting rocks creating waves resembling those of the troubled sea. The skilful pilot mounts the waves, which seem ready to engulf us, the canoe speeds over the agitated waters, and with the aid of the paddle, skilfully plied, bears us unharmed through numberless dangers. The most remarkable spot on this river is called the *cabinets*; it consists of four apartments, which you have hardly time to examine, as you are scarcely half a minute passing by them.[186] Represent to your-

[185] Spokane River rises in Cœur d'Alène Lake and flows almost directly to the Falls, thence northwest to its embouchment into the Columbia. It is about two hundred feet wide at the mouth and throughout its entire length is broken by falls and rapids, furnishing water power of great value, its total decline being a hundred and thirty feet. An early fur-trade fort known as Spokane Post stood near the present city of that name, but about 1824 was abandoned for Colville. See Franchère's *Narrative*, in our volume vi, p. 277, note 85.— Ed.

[186] Father de Smet here refers to the cliffs and rapids on Clark's Fork, about fifteen miles above Lake Pend d'Oreille; they are still known as "The Cabinets." The water rushes through a gorge, between cliffs over a hundred feet high.— Ed.

self chasms between two rocky mountains of a stupendous height, the river pent in between them in a bed of thirty or forty feet, precipitating itself down its rocky channel with irresistible fury, roaring against its jagged sides, and whitening with foam all around it. In a short space it winds in four different directions, resembling very much, forked lightning. It requires very great skill, activity, and presence of mind, to extricate yourself from this difficult pass. The Spokan lands are sandy, gravelly, and badly calculated for agriculture. The section over which I travelled consisted of immense plains of light, dry, and sandy soil, and thin forests of gum pines. We saw nothing in this noiseless solitude but a buck, running quickly from us, and disappearing [212] almost immediately. From time to time, the melancholy and piercing cry of the wood snipe increased the gloomy thoughts which this sad spot occasioned. Here, on a gay and smiling little plain, two ministers have settled themselves, with their wives, who had consented to share their husbands' soi-disant apostolical labors.[187] During the four years they have spent here, they

[187] This mission was located at the mouth of Chamokane (Tskimakain) Creek, on what is known as Walker's Prairie about forty miles northwest of Spokane, and the borders of the present Spokane reservation. It was a station of the American Commissioners founded March 20, 1839, by two missionaries who had visited the spot the previous autumn and erected log-huts on the site.

Rev. Elkanah Walker was born in Maine in 1805. Educated at Bangor Theological Seminary he had first intended to go as a missionary to Africa; but recruits being needed for the Oregon mission, he volunteered, and in 1838 came out with his wife, Mary Richardson Walker. They labored among the Spokan with considerable success — in 1841 printing a primer in that language — until the Whitman massacre (1847). Their Indians requested them to stay and promised them protection; but the government sent a military escort to take them to the settlements. There Walker bought land at Forest Grove, in the Willamette Valley, where he died in 1877.

Rev. Cushing Eells was born in Massachusetts in 1810. Graduated at Williams College, he married Myra Fairbank in the spring of 1838, and with her left immediately for the Oregon mission. Living to old age, the pioneer missionary was known throughout the West, his character revered by all. He gave over

ST. ... 'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

have baptized several of their own children. They cultivate a small farm, large enough, however, for their own maintenance and the support of their animals and fowls. It appears they are fearful that, should they cultivate more, they might have too frequent visits from the savages. They even try to prevent their encampment in their immediate neighborhood, and therefore they see and converse but seldom with the heathens, whom they have come so far to seek. A band of Spokans received me with every demonstration of friendship, and were enchanted to hear that the right kind of Black-gowns intended soon to form an establishment in the vicinity. I baptized one of their little children who was dying.

It was in these parts that in 1836 a modern Iconaclast, named Parker, broke down a cross erected over the grave of a child by some Catholic Iroquois, telling us emphatically, in the narrative of his journey, that he did not wish to leave in that country an emblem of idolatry.[188]

Poor man! — not to know better in this enlightened age! Were he to return to these mountains, he would hear the praises of the Holy Name of Jesus resounding among them;

---

fifty years of his life to missionary service, in his later years being known as Father Eells. He was instrumental in founding both Pacific University and Whitman College, and travelled extensively in the work of building churches and preaching. He frequently re-visited his Spokan proétgés, the larger portion of whom are now members of the Presbyterian church.— Ed.

[188] For Rev. Samuel Parker see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 335, note 112. Parker thus describes this incident in his *Journal of an Exploring Tour beyond the Rocky Mountains* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1838), pp. 275, 276: "One grave in the same village had a cross standing over it, which was the only relic of the kind I saw, together with this just named, during my travels in this country. But as I viewed the cross of wood made by men's hands of no avail, to benefit either the dead or the living, and far more likely to operate as a salvo to a guilty conscience, or a stepping-stone to idolatry, than to be understood in its spiritual sense to refer to a crucifixion of our sins, I took this, which the Indians had prepared, and broke it to pieces. I then told them we place a stone at the head and foot of the grave only to mark the place; and without a murmur they cheerfully acquiesced, and adopted our custom."— Ed.

he would hear the Catholics chaunting the love and mercies of God from the rivers, lakes, mountains, prairies, forests and coasts of the Columbia. He would behold the Cross planted from shore to shore for the space of a thousand miles — on the loftiest height of the Pointed Heart territory, [213] on the towering chain which separates the waters of the Missouri from the Columbia rivers; in the plains of the Wallamette, Cowlitz and Bitter Root — and, whilst I am writing to you, the Rev. Mr. Demers is occupied in planting this same sacred symbol amongst the different tribes of New Caledonia.[189] The words of Him who said that this holy sign *would draw all men to Himself*, begin to be verified with regard to the poor destitute sheep of this vast continent. Were he who destroyed that solitary, humble Cross now to return, he would find the image of Jesus Christ crucified, borne on the breast of more than 4000 Indians; and the smallest child would say to him: "Mr. Parker, we do not adore the cross; do not break it, because it reminds us of Jesus Christ who died on the cross to save us — we adore God alone."

In the beginning of May I arrived at Fort Colville on the Colville river; this year the snow melted away very early. The mountain torrents had overflowed, and the small rivers that usually moved quietly along in the month of April, had suddenly left their beds and assumed the appearance of large rivers and lakes, completely flooding all the lowlands. This rendered my journey to Vancouver by land impossible, and induced me to wait, nolens volens, at

[189] Modeste Demers was born near Quebec in 1808; educated at Quebec Seminary he was ordained in 1836, and the same year started for Red River. Thence he went overland with the Hudson's Bay brigade in 1838, arriving in Vancouver in the autumn of that year with Father Blanchet. In 1839 he visited New Caledonia, and in 1842 was detailed to found missions among the tribesmen, and to instruct the half-breeds at the forts. He labored chiefly in New Caledonia until 1847, then being consecrated bishop of Vancouver. He continued in this field of labor until his death at Victoria in 1871.— Ed.

the Fort, for the construction of the barges which were not ready until the 30th of the same month, when I was again able to pursue my journey on the river. On the same day that I arrived among the Shuyelpi or Chaudiere tribe, who resided near the Fort, I undertook to translate our prayers into their language. This kept me only one day as their language is nearly the same as that of the Flat Heads and Kalispels, having the same origin. They were all very attentive in attending my instructions, and the old, as well as the young, tried assiduously to learn their prayers. I [214] baptized all the younger children who had not received the sacrament before, for Mr. Demers had already made two excursions amongst them, with the most gratifying success. The great chief and his wife had long sighed for baptism, which holy sacrament I administered to them, naming them Martin and Mary. This chief is one of the most intelligent and pious I have become acquainted with.

The work of God does not, however, proceed without contradictions; it is necessary to prepare oneself for them beforehand when undertaking any enterprise amongst the tribes. I have had some hard trials in all my visits. I expected them, when on the 13th of May, I started to see the Okinakane tribe, who were desirous to meet a priest.[190] The interpreter, Charles, and the chief of the Shuyelpi, wished to accompany me. In crossing the Columbia river my mule returned to the shore, and ran at full speed into the forest;

[190] The Okinagan Indians are of the Salishan family, although some authorities class them with the Shushwaps of British Columbia. They formed a considerable confederacy of allied tribes, extending along the river valley of their name, and including the bands of the Similkameen River. A trading post was early erected among them, for which see Franchère's *Narrative*, in our volume vi, p. 260, note 71. Alexander Ross, who married an Okinagan woman, and lived among them for many years, is the chief authority upon their manners and customs. See Ross's *Oregon Settlers*, in our volume vii, chapters xviii to xxi. The Okinagan are now tributary to Colville agency, and number about five hundred and fifty, most of whom are Catholics.— Ed.

Charles pursued her, and two hours afterwards I was told that he had been found dead in the prairie. I hastened immediately, and perceived from a distance a great gathering of people. I soon reached the spot where he was lying, and, to my great joy, perceived that he gave signs of life. He was however, senseless, and in a most pitiful state. A copious bleeding and some days of rest restored him and we resumed our journey. This time the mule had a large rope tied around her neck, and we crossed the river without any accidents; we took a narrow path that led us by mountains, valleys, forests and prairies, following the course of the river Sharameep.[191] Towards evening we were on the borders of a deep impetuous torrent, having no other bridge than a tree which was rather slight and in constant motion from the rushing of the waters. It reminded me of the bridge of souls spoken of in the Potowattamie legends. These savages believe that souls must traverse this bridge [215] before they reach their elysium in the west. The good, they say, pass over it without danger; the bad, on the contrary, are unable to hold on, but stumble, stagger and fall into the torrent below, which sweeps them off into a labyrinth of lakes and marshes; here they drag out their existence; wretched, tormented by famine and in great agony, the living prey of all sorts of venomous reptiles and ferocious animals, wandering to and fro without ever being able to escape. We were fortunate enough to cross the trembling bridge without accident. We soon pitched our camp on the other side, and in spite of the warring waves which in falls and cascades thundered all night by our side, we enjoyed a refreshing sleep. The greater part of the next day the path conducted us through a thick and hilly forest of

[191] The country between Fort Colville and Okanagan has been but imperfectly charted. It is about sixty miles in a direct line through the Colville Indian reservation.— Ed.

fir trees; the country then became more undulating and open. From time to time we perceived an Indian burial ground, remarkable only for the posts erected on the graves, and hung with kettles, wooden plates, guns, bows and arrows, left there by the nearest relatives of the deceased — humble tokens of their grief and friendship.

We encamped on the shore of a small lake called the Sharrameep,[192] where was a Shuyelpi village; I gave these savages several instructions and baptized their infants. At my departure the whole village accompanied me. The country over which we travelled is open; the soil, sterile and sandy, and the different chains of mountains that traverse it seem to be nothing but sharp pointed rocks, thinly covered with cedars and pines. Towards evening we came up with the men of the first Okinakane encampment, who received us with the greatest cordiality and joy. The chief who came out to meet us was quite conspicuous, being arrayed in his court dress — a shirt made of a horse skin, the hair of which was outside, the mane partly on his [216] chest and back, giving him a truly fantastic and savage appearance. The camp also joined us, and the fact of my arrival having been soon noised abroad in every direction, we saw, issuing from the defiles and narrow passes of the mountains, bands of Indians who had gone forth to gather their harvest of roots. Many sick were presented to me for baptism, of which rite they already knew the importance. Before reaching the rendezvous assigned us, on the borders of the Okinakane lake, I was surrounded by more than 200 horsemen, and more than 200 others were already in waiting.[193] We recited together

---

[192] A small lake called Karamip is found on modern maps near the head of Sanpoil River.— Ed.

[193] Lake Okanagan in British Columbia is about sixty miles in length and the source of the river of that name. It would be a long and difficult journey to return thence to Fort Colville in three days; so that De Smet's rendezvous with

night prayers, and all listened with edifying attention to the instruction I gave them. The interpreter and Martin continued the religious conversation until the night was far advanced; they manifested the same anxiety to hear the word of God that the Stiel Shoi had shown.[194] All the next day was spent in prayer, instructions and hymns — I baptized 106 children and some old people, and in conclusion named the plain where these consoling scenes occurred, the "plain of prayer." It would be impossible for me to give you an idea of the piety, the happiness of these men, who are thirsting for the life-giving waters of the Divine word. How much good a missionary could do, who would reside in the midst of a people who are so desirous of receiving instruction, and correspond so faithfully with the grace of God. After some regulations and advice, I left this interesting people, and pursuing my journey for three days over mountains and through dense forests, arrived safely at Fort Colville.

Amongst the innumerable rivers that traverse the American continent, and afford means of communication between its most distant portions, the Columbia river is one of the most remarkable, not only on account of its great importance, [217] west of the mountains, but also from the dangers that attend its navigation. At some distance from the Pacific ocean, crossing a territory which exhibits, in several localities, evident marks of former volcanic eruptions, its course is frequently impeded by rapids, by chains of volcanic rocks, and immense detached masses of the same substance which, in many places, obstruct the bed of the river.[195]

---

the Indians was possibly at some smaller interior lake, entitled by him Lake Okanagan because he met that tribe upon its shores.— Ed.

[194] The Cœur d'Alène.— Ed.

[195] See Thomas W. Symons, "Report of an Examination of the Upper Columbia River," *Senate Ex. Docs.*, 47 Cong., 1 sess., No. 186.— Ed.

I embarked on this river, on the 30th of May, in one of the barges of the Hudson Bay Company; Mr. Ogden, one of the principal proprietors, offered me a place in his. I shall never forget the kindness and friendly manner with which this gentleman treated me throughout the journey, nor the many agreeable hours I spent in his company. I found his conversation instructive, his anecdotes and bon mots entertaining and timely; it was with great regret that I parted from him.[196] I will not detain you with a description of the rapids, falls and cascades, which I saw on this celebrated river; for, from its source in the mountains to the cascades it is but a succession of dangers. I will endeavour, however, to give you some idea of one of its largest rapids, called by the Canadian travellers, "great dalles."[197] A dalle is a place where the current is confined to a channel between two steep rocks, forming a prolonged narrow torrent, but of extraordinary force and swiftness. Here the river is divided into several channels separated from one another by masses of rocks, which rise abruptly above its surface. Some of these channels are navigable at certain seasons of the year, although with very great risk, even to the most experienced pilot. But when, after the melting of the snow, the river rises above its usual level, the waters in most of these channels make but one body, and the whole mass of these united streams descend with irresistible fury. At this season the most courageous dare not encounter [218] such dangers, and all navigation is discontinued. In this state the river flows with an imposing grandeur and majesty, which no language can describe. It seems at one moment

[196] See brief biographical sketch of Ogden in Townsend's *Narrative*, our volume xxi, p. 314, note 99.— Ed.

[197] For detailed descriptions of the Great Dalles of the Columbia, see *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, iii, pp. 151-159; Franchère's *Narrative*, in our volume vi, p. 337; and Ross's *Oregon Settlers*, our volume vii, pp. 130, 131— Ed.

to stay its progress; then leaps forward with resistless impetuosity, and then rebounds against the rock-girt islands of which I have already spoken, but which present only vain obstructions to its headlong course. If arrested for a moment, its accumulated waters proudly swell and mount as though instinct with life, and the next moment dash triumphantly on, enveloping the half smothered waves that preceded them as if impatient of their sluggish course, and wild to speed them on their way. Along the shore, on every projecting point, the Indian fisherman takes his stand, spreading in the eddies his ingeniously worked net, and in a short time procures for himself an abundant supply of fine fish. Attracted by the shoals of fish that come up the river, the seals gambol amid the eddying waves — now floating with their heads above the river's breast, and anon darting in the twinkling of an eye from side to side, in sportive joy or in swift pursuit of their scaly prey. But this noble river has far other recollections associated with it. Never shall I forget the sad and fatal accident which occurred on the second day of our voyage, at a spot called the "little dalles." I had gone ashore and was walking along the bank, scarcely thinking what might happen; for my breviary, papers, bed, in a word, my little all, had been left in the barge.[198] I had proceeded about a quarter of a mile, when seeing the bargemen push off from the bank and glide down the stream with an easy, careless air, I began to repent having preferred a path along the river's side, so strewn with fragments of rocks that I was compelled at every instant to turn aside or clamber over them. I still held on my course, when all at once, the barge [219] is so abruptly stopped that the rowers can hardly

[198] What are technically known as the Little Dalles of the Columbia lie above Fort Colville. The description would appear to apply to the present Whirlpool Rapids, just below Kalichen Falls, about twenty miles above Okanagan River. The entire stretch from the Nespelin River west, is a long series of difficult rapids and riffles. See "Report" cited *ante*, p. 373, note 195.— Ed.

keep their seats. Regaining, however, their equilibrium, they ply the oars with redoubled vigour, but without any effect upon the barge. They are already within the power of the angry vortex: the waters are crested with foam; a deep sound is heard which I distinguish as the voice of the pilot encouraging his men to hold to their oars — to row bravely. The danger increases every minute, and in a moment more all hope of safety has vanished. The barge — the sport of the vortex, spins like a top upon the whirling waters — the oars are useless — the bow rises — the stern descends, and the next instant all have disappeared. A death-like chill shot through my frame — a dimness came over my sight, as the cry "we are lost!" rung in my ears, and told but too plainly that my companions were buried beneath the waves. Overwhelmed with grief and utterly unable to afford them the slightest assistance, I stood a motionless spectator of this tragic scene. All were gone, and yet upon the river's breast there was not the faintest trace of their melancholy fate. Soon after the whirlpool threw up, in various directions, the oars, poles, the barge capsized, and every lighter article it had contained. Here and there I beheld the unhappy bargemen vainly struggling in the midst of the vortex. Five of them sunk never to rise again. My interpreter had twice touched bottom and after a short prayer was thrown upon the bank. An Iroquois saved himself by means of my bed; and a third was so fortunate as to seize the handle of an empty trunk, which helped him to sustain himself above water until he reached land. The rest of our journey was more fortunate. We stopped at Forts Okinakane and Wallawalla,[199] where I baptized several children.

The savages who principally frequent the borders of the Columbia river are from the lakes; the chief of whom, with

[199] For Fort Walla Walla, a Hudson's Bay post, see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 278, note 73.— Ed.

[220] several of the nation, have been baptized; also the Shuyelpi or Chaudieres, the Okinakanes, Cingpoils, Walla-wallas, Pierced Noses, Kayuses, Attayes, Spokanes, the Indians from the falls and cascades, and the Schinouks and Classops.[200]

We arrived at Fort Vancouver on the morning of the 8th June. I enjoyed the happiness and great consolation of meeting in these distant parts, two respectable Canadian priests — the Rev. Mr. Blanchet, grand vicar of all the countries west of the mountains claimed by the British crown, and the Rev. Mr. Demers. They are laboring in these regions for the same object that we are trying to accomplish in the Rocky Mountains. The kindness and benevolence with which these Reverend gentlemen received me are proofs of the pure zeal which actuates them for the salvation of these savages. They assured me that immense good might be done in the extensive regions that border on the Pacific, if a greater number of Missionaries, with means at their command, were stationed in these regions; and they urged me very strongly to obtain from my Superiors some of our Fathers. I will try to give you in my next some extracts from the letters of these Missionaries, which will make the country known to you, its extent, and the progress of their mission. The Governor of the Honorable Company of Hudson Bay, Dr. McLaughlin, who resides at Fort Vancouver, after having given me every possible proof of interest, as a good Catholic, advised me to do every thing in my power

[200] Of these Indian tribes the Chaudière, Okinagan, Sanpoil (Cingpoils), have been described *ante*, in notes 162, 190, 161; for the Walla Walla and Cayuse see our volume vii, p. 137, note 37; for the Nez Percés (Pierced Noses), volume vi, p. 340, note 145; for the Indians of the Dalles, volume vii, p. 129, note 31; the Chinook (Schinooks), volume vi, p. 240, note 40; for Clatsop (Classops), volume vi, p. 239, note 39. The Attayes were probably the Yakima, an important Shahaptian tribe in the valley of that river; one branch of the tribe was called Atanum, and a Catholic mission by that name was in later years established among them.— Ed.

to gratify the wishes of the Canadian Missionaries. His principal reason is, that if Catholicity was rapidly planted in these tracts where civilization begins to dawn, it would be more quickly introduced thence into the interior. Already a host of ministers have overrun a part of the country, and have settled wherever they may derive [221] some advantages for the privations their philanthropy imposes on them. Such is the state of these regions of the new world, as yet so little known: you perceive that our prospects are by no means discouraging. Permit me therefore to repeat the great principle you have so often recommended to me, and which I have not forgotten: "Courage and confidence in God!" With the mercy of God, the church of Jesus Christ may soon have the consolation of seeing her standard planted in these distant lands on the ruins of idolatry and of the darkest superstition. Pray then that the Lord of such a rich harvest may send us numerous fellow laborers; for in so extensive a field we are but five, and beset with so many dangers, that at the dawn of day we have often reason to doubt whether we will live to see the sun go down. It is not that we have any thing to fear from the climate; far from it — for, if here death came only by sickness, we might indeed count upon many years, but water, fire, and the bow, often hurry their victims off when least expected. Of a hundred men who inhabit this country, there are not ten who do not die by some or other fatal accident. The afternoon of the 30th June I resumed my place in one of the barges of the English Company, and took my leave of the worthy and respectable Governor. — To my great joy I found that the Rev. Mr. Demers was one of the passengers, being about to undertake an apostolic excursion among the different tribes of New Caledonia, who, according to the accounts of several Canadian travellers, were most anxious to see a Blackgown, and hear the word of God. The wind being favorable, the sails of the

barge were unfurled and the sailors plying their oars at the same time, the 11th of July saw us landed safely at Fort Wallawalla. The next day I parted, with many regrets, from my esteemed friends, Rev. Mr. Demers, and Mr. [222] Ogden. Accompanied only by my interpreter, we continued our land route to the 19th, through woods and immense plains. The high plains which separate the waters of the Snake river from those of the Spokan, offer some natural curiosities. I fancied myself in the vicinity of several fortified cities, surrounded by walls and small forts, scattered in different directions. The pillars are regular pentagons, from two to four feet in diameter, erect, joined together, forming a wall from forty to eighty feet high, and extending several miles in the form of squares and triangles, detached from one another, and in different directions.[201] On our road we met some Pierced Noses, and a small band of Spokanes, who accosted us with many demonstrations of friendship, and although very poor, offered us more salmon than we could carry. The Pointed Hearts (a tribe which shall ever be dear to me) came to meet us, and great was the joy on both sides, on beholding one another again. They had strictly observed all the rules I had laid down for them at my first visit. They accompanied me for three days, to the very limits of their territory. We then planted a cross on the summit of a high mountain, covered with snow, and after the example of the Flat Heads, all the people consecrated themselves inviolably to the service of God. We remained there that night. The next morning, after reciting our prayers in

[201] Part of the Great Plain of the Columbia, broken by many fantastic shapes of the volcanic underlying rock. Most notable of these is the Grand Coulée, which, however, De Smet did not cross, for it lies north of Spokane River. He probably took the trail afterwards developed into a part of the Mullan road, from Great Falls of Missouri to Walla Walla. From the land of the Cœur d'Alène he returned along the route by which he had come out — the St. Regis Pass and river St. Regis Borgia.— ED.

common, and giving them a long exhortation, we bade them farewell. The 20th I continued my journey over terrific mountains, steep rocks, and through apparently impenetrable forests. I could scarcely believe that any human being had ever preceded us over such a road. At the end of four days' journey, replete with fatigue and difficulties, we reached the borders of the Bitter Root river, and on the evening of the 27th I had the happiness of arriving safely at St. [223] Mary's, and of finding my dear brethren in good health.—The Flat Heads, accompanied by Father Point, had left the village ten days before, to procure provisions. A few had remained to guard the camp, and their families awaited my return. The 29th, I started to rejoin the Flat Heads on the Missouri river. We ascended the Bitter Root to its source, and the 1st of August, having clambered up a high mountain, we planted a cross on its very summit, near a beautiful spring, one of the sources of the Missouri.[202] The next day, after a forced march, we joined the camp where we had such a budget of news to open, so many interesting facts to communicate to each other, that we sat up a greater part of the night. The Rev. Father Point and myself, accompanied our dear neophytes, who to obtain their daily bread, are obliged to hunt the buffalo, even over the lands of their most inveterate enemies, the Black Feet. On the 15th of August, the feast of the Assumption, (the same on which this letter is dated) I offered up the sacrifice of the Mass, in a noble plain, watered by one of the three streams that form the head waters of the Missouri, to thank God for all the blessings He had bestowed on us during this last year. I had the consolation of seeing fifty Flat Heads approach the holy table in so humble, modest and devout a manner,

[202] This was the route followed by Clark on his return journey in 1806—through Gibbon's Pass, and down the upper waters of Big Hole (or Wisdom) River, an affluent of the Jefferson.— Ed.

that to my, perhaps partial eye, they resembled angels more than men. On the same day I determined, for the interest of this mission, which seems so absolutely to require it, to traverse for the fourth time the dangerous American desert. If heaven preserves me, (for I have to travel through a region infested by thousands of hostile savages) I will send you the account of this last journey.—You see then, Rev. Father, that in these deserts we must more than ever keep our souls prepared to render the fearful account, in consequence of the perils that surround us; and [224] as it would be desirable that we could be replaced immediately, in case of any accident occurring — again I say to you, pray that the Lord may send us fellow laborers. "Rogate ergo Dominum messis ut mittat operarios in messem suam." And thousands of souls, who would otherwise be lost, will bless you one day in eternity. Rev. Father Point has expressed a desire to be sent amongst the Blackfeet. Until they are willing to listen to the word of God, which I think will be before long, he intends to preach the gospel to the Pointed Hearts and the neighboring tribes. I trust we shall be able to make as cheering a report of these as we have already done of our first neophytes. I have found them all in the best dispositions. The Rev. Father Mengarini remains with the Flatheads and Pends d'oreilles. On my first journey, in the autumn of 1841, which ended at Fort Colville, I baptized 190 persons of the Kalispel tribe. On my visit, last spring, to the various distant tribes, (of which I have just finished giving you the account) I had the consolation of baptizing 418 persons, 60 of whom were of the Pends d'oreille tribe of the great lake; 82 of the Kœtnays or Skalzi; 100 of the Pointed Hearts; 56 of the Shuyelpi; 106 of the Okenakanes, and 14 in the Okenakanes and Wallawalla Forts.—These, with 500 baptized last year, in different parts of the country, mostly amongst the Flat Heads and Kalispels, and

196 that I baptized on Christmas day, at St. Mary's, with the 350 baptized by Rev. Fathers Mengarini and Point, make a total of 1654 souls, wrested from the power of the devil. For what the Scripture calls the "spirit of the world" has not wherewith to introduce itself amongst them. These poor people find their happiness even in this world in the constant practice of their christian duties. We may almost say of them, that all who are baptized are saved.— [225] Since God has inspired you with a zealous desire to second the views of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, entreat those pious persons to whom you may communicate your designs, to redouble their prayers in our behalf. I conclude by beseeching you earnestly to remember me frequently and fervently in the Holy Sacrifice.

I remain, very Rev. and dear Father,

Your affectionate servant
and brother in Christ,
P. J. De Smet, S.J.

LETTER XIV

St. Mary, June 28th, 1842.

Rev. Father:

Thanks be to God, our hopes have at length begun to be realized; the tender blossom has been succeeded by precious fruit, daily more and more visible in our colony; the chief and people, by their truly edifying conduct, give us already the sweetest consolation. Pentecost was for us and for our beloved neophytes a day of blessings, of holy exultation. Eighty of them enjoyed the happiness of partaking for the first time of the bread of Angels. Their assiduity in assisting during a month at the instructions we gave them, three times a day, had assured us of their zeal and favor;

but a retreat of three days, which served as a more immediate preparation, contributed still more to convince us of their sincerity. From an early hour in the morning repeated discharges of musketry announced afar the arrival of the great, the glorious day. At the first sound of the bell a crowd of savages hurried towards our church. One of our Fathers, in a surplice and stole, preceded by three choristers, one of whom bore aloft the banner of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, went out to receive them, and conduct them in procession, and to the sound of joyous canticles, into the Temple of the Lord. What piety — what religious recollection, amidst that throng! They observed a strict silence, but at the same time the joy and gladness that filled their hearts, shone on their happy countenances. The ardent love which already animated [227] these innocent hearts, was inflamed afresh by the fervent aspirations to the adorable Sacrament, which were recited aloud by one of our Fathers, who also intermingled occasionally some stanzas of canticles. The tender devotion, and the profound faith with which these Indians received their God, really edified and affected us. That morning at 11 o'clock they renewed their baptismal vows, and in the afternoon they made the solemn consecration of their hearts to the Blessed Virgin, the tutelar patroness of this place.— May these pious sentiments which the true religion alone could inspire, be preserved amongst our dear children. We hope for their continuance, and what increases our hope is, that at the time of this solemnity, about one hundred and twenty persons approached the tribunal of penance, and since that truly memorable occasion, we have from thirty to forty communions, and from fifty to sixty confessions every Sunday.

The feast of Corpus Christi was solemnized by another ceremony not less touching, and calculated to perpetuate the gratitude and devotion of our pious Indians towards our

amiable Queen. This was the solemn erection of a statue to the Blessed Virgin, in memory of her appar ition to little Paul. The following is a brief account of the ceremony. From the entrance of our chapel to the spot where little Paul received such a special favor — the avenue was simply the green sward, the length of which on both sides was bordered by garlands, hung in festoons — triumphal arches, gracefully arranged, arose at regular distances. At the end of the avenue, and in the middle of a kind of repository, stood the pedestal, which was destined to receive the statue. The hour specified having struck, the procession issued from the chapel in this order. At the head was borne aloft the banner of the Sacred Heart [228] followed closely by little Paul carrying the statue and accompanied by two choristers, who profusely strewed the way with flowers. Then came the two Fathers, one vested in a cope, and the other in a surplice.— Finally the march was closed by the chiefs and all the members of the colony emulating each other in their zeal to pay their tribute of thanksgiving and praise to their blessed Mother. When they reached the spot one of our Fathers, in a short exhortation, in which he reminded them of the signal prodigy and assistance of the Queen of Heaven, encouraged our dear neophytes to sentiments of confidence in the protection of Mary. After this address and the singing of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the procession returned in the same order to the church. Oh! how ardently we desired that all the friends of our holy religion could have witnessed the devotion and recollection of these new children of Mary. It was also our intention not to dismiss them until we had given them the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, but unfortunately not possessing a Remonstrance we were obliged to defer this beautiful ceremony until the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At that time the Sacred Host was carried in solemn procession, and

since then each Sunday after Vespers, the faithful enjoy the happiness of receiving the Benediction.

May the blessing of God really descend upon us and our colony. We hope for it through the assistance of your prayers and those of all our friends.

I remain, Rev. Father,

Your very humble friend and servant,

GREG. MENGARINI, S.J.

LETTER XV

Fort Vancouver, 28th September, 1841.

Reverend Father:

BLESSED be the Divine Providence of the all-powerful God who has protected, preserved and restored you safely to your dear neophytes.

I congratulate the country upon the inestimable treasure it possesses by the arrival and establishment therein of the members of the Society of Jesus. Be so kind as to express to the Reverend Fathers and Brothers my profound veneration and respect for them. I beg of God to bless your labours and to continue your successful efforts. In a few years you will enjoy the glory and consolation of beholding through your means all the savages residing on the head waters of the Columbia, ranging themselves under the standard of the Cross. I do not doubt but that our excellent governor, Dr. McLaughlin, will give you all the assistance in his power. It is very fortunate for our holy religion, that this noble-hearted man should be at the head of the affairs of the honorable Hudson Bay Company, west of the Rocky Mountains. He protected it before our arrival in these regions. He still gives it his support by word and example, and many favors. As we are in the same coun-

try, aiming at the same end, namely, the triumph of the holy Catholic faith throughout this vast territory, the Rev. Mr. Demers and myself will always take the most lively interest in your welfare and progress, and we are [230] convinced that, whatever concerns us will equally interest you. The following is an account of our present situation:

The Catholic establishment of Wallamette consists of nearly 80 families. The one at Cowlitz of only five,— twenty-two at Nez-quale on Puget-sound, which is from 25 to 30 leagues above Cowlitz.[203] Besides these stations we visit from time to time, the nearest Forts where the Catholics in the service of the Hudson Bay Company reside. This is what takes up almost all our time. We are much in want of lay brothers and nuns, of school masters and mistresses. We have to attend to every spiritual as well as temporal affair, which is a great burden to us. The wives of the Canadians, taken from every quarter of the country, cause throughout the families a diversity of languages. They speak almost generally a rude jargon of which we can scarcely make any use in our public instructions — hence proceed the obstacles to our progress,— we go along slowly. We are obliged to teach them French and their catechism

[203] It was not the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company to encourage settlements. Dr. McLoughlin, however, permitted some of the retired servants of the company to settle at French Prairie (or Chemayway) in the Willamette Valley. There, by 1830, a considerable group of farmers were found, mostly of French-Canadian origin. Among the earliest settlers were Louis Labonte, Etienne Lucier, and Joseph Gervais.

Fort Nisqually, on Puget Sound, four miles northeast of the mouth of Nisqually River, was founded in 1833 as a fur-trading post. In 1838 the Puget Sound Agricultural Company was formed in London, most of its members being Hudson's Bay Company men, in order to exploit the region of the sound; consequently a considerable settlement grew up near the fort.

In 1837 Simon Plomondeau was advised by Dr. McLoughlin to settle on Cowlitz Prairie, in the valley of the river of that name. Soon one Faincaut settled near him. In 1839 a large farm was surveyed by Charles Ross, John Work, and James Douglas as a company settlement. It grew but little until the advent of Americans in 1853-54.— Ed.

together, which occasions much delay. We are really overwhelmed with business. The savages apply to us from all sides. Some of them are indifferent, and we have not time to instruct them. We make them, occasionally, hasty visits, and baptize the children and the adults who happen to be in danger of death. But we have no time to learn their languages, and until now have been without an interpreter to translate the prayers we wish them to learn. It is only lately that I have succeeded in translating them into the Tchinoux language. Our difficulties are greatly increased by this variety of languages; each of the following tribes has a different dialect: The Kalapouyas, towards the head waters of the Wallamette,[204] the Tchinoux of the Columbia river; the Kaijous from Walla-walla; the Pierced Noses, Okanakanes, Flat Heads, Snakes, Cowlitz, the [231] Klickatates from the interior, north of Vancouver; [205] the Tcheheles, to the north of the mouth of the Columbia river; the Nezquales,[206] and those from the interior or of the Puget sound Bay, those of the Travers river, the Khalams [207] of the above mentioned bay, those of Vancouver Island, and those from the northern posts on the sea shore, and from

[204] For the Kalapuya see our volume vii, p. 230, note 80.— Ed.

[205] The Cowlitz were a numerous and powerful tribe of Salishan stock, in the valley of the river of that name. They have now lost their tribal identity, the remnant (there were about a hundred and twenty-five in 1882) having lands allotted in severalty.

For the Klikatat, see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 302, note 88. On their later history it may be noted that they participated in the Yakima treaty of 1855, and are now one of the consolidated tribes on Yakima reservation; a few, however, maintaining themselves on White Salmon River.— Ed.

[206] For the Chehalis consult our volume vi, p. 256, note 65.

The Nisqualli are a Salishan tribe on and in the vicinity of Nisqually River There are now but about a hundred and fifty of this tribe surviving on the Puyallup reservation, Washington.— Ed.

[207] The Skallam (Clallam), a tribe of Salishan origin, were first met by whites along Admiralty Inlet. There are now about seven hundred and fifty of these Indians extant, having allotments in severalty both at Jamestown and Port Gamble.— Ed.

the interior of the part of the country watered by the tributary streams of the Travers river, all have their different languages.

Such are the difficulties we have daily to overcome. Our hearts bleed at the sight of so many souls who are lost under our eyes, without our being able to carry to them the word of Life. Moreover, our temporal resources are limited. We are but two, and our trunks did not arrive last spring by the vessel belonging to the honorable Hudson Bay Company. We have exhausted our means. The savages, women and children, ask us in vain for Rosaries. We have no more Catechisms of the diocese left to distribute among them; no English Prayer Books for the Catholic Irish; no controversial books to lend. Heaven appears to be deaf to our prayers, supplications and most ardent wishes. You can judge of our situation and how much we are to be pitied. We are in the mean time surrounded by sects who are using all their efforts to scatter every where the poisonous seeds of error, and who try to paralyze the little good we may effect.

The Methodists are, first, at Wallamette, which is about eight miles from my establishment; second, near the Klatraps, south of the mouth of the Columbia river; third, at Nez Quali, or Puget-sound; fourth, at the Great Dalles, south of Wallawalla; and fifth, at the Wallamette Falls.[208]

[208] Methodist missions in Oregon were founded by Rev. Jason Lee, for whom see Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 138, note 13. The establishment in the Willamette Valley was the central one, and consisted largely of an agricultural settlement with a school for Indian children, that afterwards developed into Willamette University. It was situated about eighteen miles above Champoeg, not far from Salem. The second station at Clatsop (not Klatraps) Plains, south of Point Adams, was founded by J. H. Frost, accompanied by Solomon Smith and Calvin Tibbits, who had married Clatsop women. The families removed to this point in February, 1841. Two years later Frost returned to the United States, and J. L. Parrish took up the work. Little attempt was made at this point to reach the Indians. The mission at Nisqually was begun in 1839. The following year, J. P. Richmond was stationed here; he returned home

The Presbyterian Missions are at Wallawalla, as you approach Colville.[209] In the midst of so many adversaries we try to keep our ground firmly; to increase our numbers, [232] and to visit various parts, particularly where the danger is most pressing. We also endeavor to anticipate the others, and to inculcate the Catholic principles in those places where error has not as yet found a footing, or even to arrest the progress of evil, to dry it up at its source. The conflict has been violent, but the savages now begin to open their eyes as to who are the real ministers of Jesus Christ. Heaven declares itself in our favor. If we had a priest to hold a permanent station amongst the savages, the country would be ours in two years. The Methodist Missions are failing rapidly; they are losing their credit and the little influence they possessed. By the grace of God, our cause has prevailed at Wallamette. This spring, Mr. Demers withdrew from the Methodists a whole village of savages, situate at the foot of the Wallamette Falls. Mr. Demers also visited the Schinouks [Chinook], below the Columbia river. They are well disposed towards Catholicity. I have just arrived from Cascades, which is eighteen leagues from Vancouver. The savages at this place had resisted all the insinuations of a pretended Minister.[210] It was my first mission, and only lasted ten days. They learned in that

after two years, whereupon the Nisqually mission was abandoned. The Indian mission at the Dalles was begun in March, 1838, by Daniel Lee and H. K. W. Perkins. It was conducted with varying success until 1845, when the property was disposed of to the Presbyterians. The settlement at Willamette Falls, made in 1840 by A. F. Waller, was chiefly a colonizing experiment. In 1844 there were forty Methodists at this place.— Ed.

[209] Father Blanchet here refers to the missions of Dr. Whitman at Waiilatpu for the Cayuse, and that of H. H. Spaulding at Lapwai for the Nez Percés. See Townsend's *Narrative*, in our volume xxi, p. 352, note 125.— Ed.

[210] Perkins at the Dalles mission (see *ante*, note 208) had attempted to reach the Indians gathered at the Cascades. But Blanchet gained more influence over these nations than the Protestant missionary, for the natives were better pleased with the Catholic ceremonials.— Ed.

time the sign of the cross, the offering of their hearts to God, the Lord's Prayer, the Angelical Salutation, the Apostles' Creed, the ten Commandments, and those of the Church. I intend to revisit them soon, near Vancouver, and to baptize a considerable number. Rev. Mr. Demers has been absent these two months, on a visit to the savages at the Bay of Puget-sound, who have long since besought him to come amongst them. I have not been able to visit since the month of May, my catechumens at Flackimar, a village whose people were converted last spring, and who had turned a deaf ear to a Mr. Waller,[211] who is established at Wallamette. Judge then, sir, how great are our labors, and how much it would advance our [233] mutual interest, were you to send hither one of your Rev. Fathers, with one of the three lay brothers. In my opinion, it is on this spot that we must seek to establish our holy religion. It is here that we should have a college, convent, and schools. It is here that one day a successor of the Apostles will come from some part of the world to settle, and provide for the spiritual necessities of this vast region, which, moreover, promises such an abundant harvest.— Here is the field of battle, where we must in the first place gain the victory. It is here that we must establish a beautiful mission. From the lower stations the Missionaries and Rev. Fathers could go forth in all directions to supply the distant stations, and announce the word of God to the infidels still plunged in darkness and the shadows of death. If your plans should not permit you to change the place of your establishment, at least take into consideration the need in which we stand of a Rev.

[211] Probably intended for Clackamas, the name of a tribe upon the river of the same designation, which empties into the Willamette at the Falls.

A. F. Waller came to reinforce the Methodist mission in 1840, and was sent to Willamette Falls. He had a legal controversy with Dr. McLoughlin in relation to the title to land at this place. Waller became a citizen of Oregon, acquired considerable property, and died in Willamette Valley in 1872.— Ed.

Father, and of a lay brother, to succor us in our necessities. By the latest dates from the Sandwich Islands, I am informed that the Rev. Mr. Chochure had arrived there, accompanied by three priests, the Rev. Mr. Walsh making the fourth.[212] A large Catholic Church it was hoped would have been ready last autumn for the celebration of the Holy Mysteries. The natives were embracing our everlasting faith in great numbers, and the meeting houses were almost abandoned.

The Bishop of Juliopolis, stationed at Red River, [213] writes to me that the savages dwelling near the base of the eastern part of the Rocky Mountains have deputed to him a half blood who resides amongst them, to obtain from his Grace a priest to instruct them. Rev. Mr. Thibault is destined for this mission.

I remain, Rev. Father, yours,

F. N. Blanchet.

LETTER XVI

University of St. Louis, 1st Nov. 1842.

Very Rev. Father:

In my last letter of August, I promised to write to you from St. Louis, should I arrive safely in that city. Heaven

[212] A long struggle had occurred to secure the entrance of Catholic missionaries to the Hawaiian Islands. The first priests, who came out in 1827, were soon expelled. Returning in 1836, after a long struggle all were obliged to depart save Robert Walsh, an Irish priest, who was permitted to remain, provided he would agree not to teach the natives. In 1839 a French man-of-war threatened the government with a bombardment and succeeded in wresting from them the promise of toleration for Catholics; thereupon Etienne Rouchouse (Chochure), bishop of Nilopolis, arrived in May, 1838, accompanied by two priests. The next year the bishop returned to France for reinforcements; when on the outward voyage the vessel foundered off Cape Horn, all on board perishing.— Ed.

[213] In 1818 J. N. Provencher was dispatched from Quebec to minister to the Red River settlers, and established a station at St. Boniface. In 1822, he was

has preserved me, and here I am about to fulfil my promise. Leaving Rev. Father Point and the Flat Head camp on the river Madison, I was accompanied by twelve of our Indians. We travelled in three days, a distance of 150 miles, crossing two chains of mountains,[214] in a section of coun try frequently visited by the Black Feet warriors, without, however, meeting with any of these scalping savages. At the mouth of the Twenty-five Yard River, a branch of the Yellow Stone, we found 250 huts, belonging to several nations, all friendly to us — the Flat Heads, Kalispels, Pierced Noses, Kayuses, and Snakes. I spent three days amongst them to exhort them to perseverance, and to make some preparations for my long journey. The day of my departure, ten neophytes presented themselves at my lodge to serve as my escort, and to introduce me to the Crow tribe. On the evening of the second day we were in the midst of this large and interesting tribe. The Crows had perceived us from a distance; as we approached, some of them recognised me, and at the cry of "the Blackgown! the Blackgown!" the Crows, young and old, to the number of three thousand, came out of their wigwams. On entering the village, a comical scene occurred, of which they suddenly made me the principal personage. All the chiefs, and [235] about fifty of their warriors, hastened around me, and I was literally assailed by them. Holding me by the gown, they drew me in every direction, whilst

---

consecrated bishop of Juliopolis, and remained at St. Boniface until his death in 1853. His jurisdiction included Rupert's Land and all the Northwest provinces, whither he sent out many missionaries during his long episcopate.— Ed.

[214] Passing from Madison to Gallatin rivers, crossing the divide that separates them, and then from Gallatin to the Yellowstone, probably by way of Bozeman's Pass, the nearest and most frequented route. This would bring the travellers out upon the Yellowstone at about the present Livingston, Montana.— Ed.

[215] One of the proprietors was Pierre Chouteau, whom Father de Smet had doubtless known in St. Louis. Larpenteur relates this meeting (Coues, *Larpenteur's Journal*, i, p. 174), and states that the opposition of a new firm had brought the American Fur Company partners to the upper river to concert plans.— Ed

a robust savage of gigantic stature, seemed resolved to carry me off by main force. All spoke at the same time, and appeared to be quarrelling, whilst I, the sole object of all this contention, could not conceive what they were about. I remained passive, not knowing whether I should laugh or be serious. The interpreter soon came to my relief, and said that all this uproar was but an excess of politeness and kindness towards me, as every one wished to have the honor of lodging and entertaining the Blackgown. With his advice I selected my host, upon which the others immediately loosed their hold, and I followed the chief to his lodge, which was the largest and best in the camp. The Crows did not tarry long before they all gathered around me, and loaded me with marks of kindness. The social calumet, emblem of savage brotherhood and union, went round that evening so frequently, that it was scarcely ever extinguished. It was accompanied with all the antics for which the Crows are so famous, when they offer the calumet to the Great Spirit, to the four winds, to the sun, fire, earth and water. These Indians are unquestionably the most anxious to learn; the most inquisitive, ingenious, and polished of all the savage tribes east of the mountains. They profess great friendship and admiration for the whites. They asked me innumerable questions; among others, they wished to know the number of the whites. Count, I replied, the blades of grass upon your immense plains, and you will know pretty nearly the number of the whites. They all smiled, saying that the thing was impossible, but they understood my meaning. And when I explained to them the vast extent of the "villages" inhabited by white men (viz. New York, [236] Philadelphia, London, Paris) the grand lodges (houses) built as near each other as the fingers of my hand, and four or five piled up, one above the other — (meaning the different stories of our dwellings;) when I told them that some

of these lodges (speaking of churches and towers) were as high as mountains, and large enough to contain all the Crows together; that in the grand lodge of the national council (the Capitol at Washington) all the great chiefs of the whole world could smoke the calumet at their ease; that the roads in these great villages were always filled with passengers, who came and went more thickly than the vast herds of buffalos that sometimes cover their beautiful plains; when I explained to them the extraordinary celerity of those moving lodges (the cars on the rail road) that leave far behind them the swiftest horse, and which are drawn along by frightful machines, whose repeated groanings re-echo far and wide, as they belch forth immense volumes of fire and smoke; and next, those fire canoes, (steamboats) which transport whole villages, with provisions, arms and baggage, in a few days, from one country to another, crossing large lakes, (the seas) ascending and descending the great rivers and streams; when I told them that I had seen white men mounting up into the air (in balloons) and flying with as much agility as the warrior eagle of their mountains, then their astonishment was at its height; and all placing their hands upon their mouths, sent forth at the same time, one general cry of wonder. "The Master of life is great," said the chief, "and the white men are His favorites." But what appeared to interest them more than aught else, was prayer (religion;) to this subject they listened with the strictest, undivided attention. They told me that they had already heard of it, and they knew that this prayer made men good and wise on earth, and insured [237] their happiness in the future life. They begged me to permit the whole camp to assemble, that they might hear for themselves the words of the Great Spirit, of whom they had been told such wonders. Immediately three United States flags were erected on the field, in the midst of the camp, and three thousand

savages, including the sick, who were carried in skins, gathered around me. I knelt beneath the banner of our country, my ten Flat Head neophytes by my side, and surrounded by this multitude, eager to hear the glad tidings of the gospel of peace. We began by intoning two canticles, after which I recited all the prayers, which we interpreted to them: then again we sang canticles, and I finished by explaining to them the Apostles' Creed and the ten Commandments. They all appeared to be filled with joy, and declared it was the happiest day of their lives. They begged me to have pity on them — to remain among them and instruct them and their little children in the knowledge, love and service of the Great Spirit. I promised that a Blackgown should visit them, but on condition that the chiefs would engage themselves to put a stop to the thievish practices so common amongst them, and to oppose vigorously the corrupt morals of their tribe. Believing me to be endowed with supernatural powers, they had entreated me from the very commencement of our conversation, to free them from the sickness that then desolated the camp, and to supply them with plenty. I repeated to them on this occasion that the Great Spirit alone could remove these evils — God, I said, listens to the supplications of the good and pure of heart; of those who detest their sins, and wish to devote themselves to His service — but He shuts his ears to the prayers of those who violate His holy law. In His anger, God had destroyed by fire, five infamous "villages" (Sodom, Gomorrah, [238] etc.) in consequence of their horrid abominations — that the Crows walked in the ways of these wicked men, consequently they could not complain if the Great Spirit seemed to punish them by sickness, war and famine. They were themselves the authors of all their calamities — and if they did not change their mode of life very soon, they might expect to see their misfortunes increase from day to day — while the most awful torments

awaited them, and all wicked men after their death. I assured them in fine that heaven would be the reward of those who would repent of their evil deeds and practice the religion of the Great Spirit.

The grand orator of the camp was the first to reply: "Black Gown," said he, "I understand you. You have said what is true. Your words have passed from my ears into my heart — I wish all could comprehend them." Whereon, addressing himself to the Crows, he repeated forcibly, "Yes, Crows, the Black Gown has said what is true. We are dogs, for we live like dogs. Let us change our lives and our children will live." I then held long conferences with all the chiefs assembled in council. I proposed to them the example of the Flat Heads, and Pends-d'oreilles, whose chiefs made it their duty to exhort their people to the practice of virtue, and who knew how to punish as they deserved all the prevarications against God's holy law. They promised to follow my advice, and assured me that I would find them in better dispositions on my return. I flatter myself with the hope, that this visit, the good example of my neophytes, but principally the prayers of the Flat Heads will gradually produce a favourable change among the Crows. A good point in their character, and one that inspires me with almost the certainty of their amendment, is, that they have hitherto resisted courageously all attempts [239] to introduce spirituous liquors among them. "For what is this fire-water good?" said the chief to a white man who tried to bring it into their country, "it burns the throat and stomach; it makes a man like a bear who has lost his senses. He bites, he growls, he scratches and he howls, he falls down as if he were dead. Your fire-water does nothing but harm — take it to our enemies, and they will kill each other, and their wives and children will be worthy of pity. As for us we do not want it, we are fools enough without it." A

very touching scene occurred during the council. Several of the savages wished to examine my Missionary Cross; I thence took occasion to explain to them the sufferings of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the cause of His death on the Cross — I then placed my Cross in the hands of the great chief; he kissed it in the most respectful manner; raising his eyes to heaven, and pressing the Cross with both his hands to his heart, he exclaimed, "O Great Spirit, take pity on me and be merciful to Thy poor children." And his people followed his example. I was in the village of the Crows when news was brought that two of their most distinguished warriors had fallen victims to the rage and cruelty of the Black Feet. The heralds or orators went round the camp, proclaiming in a loud voice the circumstances of the combat and the tragic end of the two brave men. A gloomy silence prevailed every where, only interrupted by a band of mourners, whose appearance alone was enough to make the most insensible heart bleed, and rouse to vengeance the entire nation. This band was composed of the mothers of the two unfortunate warriors who had fallen, their wives carrying their new born infants in their arms, their sisters, and all their little children. The unhappy creatures had their heads shaven and cut in every direction; they were gashed with numerous [240] wounds, whence the blood constantly trickled. In this pitiable state they rent the air with their lamentations and cries, imploring the warriors of their nation to have compassion on them — to have compassion on their desolate children — to grant them one last favour, the only cure for their affliction, and that was, to go at once and inflict signal vengeance on the murderers. They led by the bridle all the horses that belonged to the deceased. A Crow chief mounting immediately the best of these steeds, brandished his tomahawk in the air, proclaiming that he was ready to avenge the deed. Several young men rallied

about him. They sung together the war-song, and started the same day, declaring that they would not return empty-handed (viz: without scalps).

On these occasions the near relations of the one who has fallen, distribute every thing that they possess, retaining nothing but some old rags wherewith to clothe themselves. The mourning ceases as soon as the deed is avenged. The warriors cast at the feet of the widows and orphans the trophies torn away from the enemies. Then passing from extreme grief to exultation, they cast aside their tattered garments, wash their bodies, besmear themselves with all sorts of colours, deck themselves off in their best robes, and with the scalps affixed to the end of poles, march in triumph round the camp, shouting and dancing, accompanied at the same time by the whole village.

On the 29th I bade adieu to my faithful companions, the Flat Heads, and the Crows. Accompanied by Ignatius, Gabriel, and by two brave Americans, who, although Protestants, wished to serve as guides to a Catholic Missionary, I once more plunged into the arid plains of the Yellow Stone. Having already described this region, I have nothing new to add concerning it. This desert is undoubtedly [241] dangerous, and has been the scene of more tragic deeds, combats, stratagems, and savage cruelties, than any other region. At each step, the Crow interpreter, Mr. V. C., who had sojourned eleven years in the country, recounted different transactions; pointing, meanwhile, to the spots where they had occurred, which, in our situation, made our blood run cold, and our hair stand erect. It is the battle ground where the Crows, the Black Feet, Scioux, Sheyennes, Assiniboins, Arikaras, and Minatares, fight out their interminable quarrels, avenging and revenging, without respite, their mutual wrongs. After six days' march, we found ourselves upon the very spot where a combat had recently taken

place. The bloody remains of ten Assiniboins, who had been slain, were scattered here and there — almost all the flesh eaten off by the wolves and carniverous birds. At the sight of these mangled limbs — of the vultures that soared above our heads, after having satiated themselves with the unclean repast, and the region round me, which had so lately resounded with the savage cries of more savage men, engaged in mutual carnage — I own that the little courage I thought I possessed, seemed to fail me entirely, and give place to a secret terror, which I sought in vain to stifle or conceal from my companions. We observed in several places the fresh tracks of men and horses, leaving no doubt in our minds as to the proximity of hostile parties; our guide even assured me that he thought we were already discovered, but by continuing our precautions he hoped we might perhaps elude their craftiness and malicious designs, for the savages very seldom make their attacks in open day. The following is the description of our regular march until the 10th of September. At day-break we saddled our horses and pursued our journey; at 10 A. M. we breakfasted in a suitable place, that would offer [242] some advantage in case of an attack. After an hour and a half, or two hours' rest, we resumed our march a second time, always trotting our horses, until sunset, when we unsaddled them to dine and sup; we then lighted a good fire, hastily raised a little cabin of branches, to induce our ever watchful foes, in case they pursue us, to suppose that we had encamped for the night; for, as soon as the inimical videttes discover any thing of the kind, they make it known by a signal to the whole party. They then immediately assemble, and concert the plan of attack. In the meantime, favored by the darkness, we pursued our journey quietly until 10 or 12 o'clock at night, and then, without fire or even shelter, each one disposed himself as well as he might, for sleep. It appears to me

that I hear you ask: But what did you eat for your breakfast and supper? Examine the notes of my journal, and you will acknowledge that our fare was such as would excite the envy of the most fastidious gastronome. From the 25th of August to the 10th of September, 1842, we killed, to supply our wants, as we journeyed on, three fine buffalo cows, and two large bulls; (only to obtain the tongue and marrow bones) two large deer, as fat as we could have wished; three goats, two black-tail deer, a big-horn or mountain sheep, two fine grey bears, and a swan — to say nothing of the pheasants, fowls, snipes, ducks and geese.

In the midst of so much game, we scarcely felt the want of bread, sugar or coffee. The haunches, tongues and ribs replaced these. And the bed? It is soon arranged. We were in a country where you lose no time in taking off your shoes; your wrap your buffalo robe around you, the saddle serves as a pillow, and thanks to the fatigues of a long journey of about forty miles, under a burning sun, you have scarcely laid your head upon it before you are asleep. [243] The gentlemen of Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellow Stone, received me with great politeness and kindness. I rested there during three days. A journey so long and continuous, through regions where the drought had been so great that every sign of vegetation had disappeared, had very much exhausted our poor horses. The 1800 miles that we had yet to travel, were not to be undertaken lightly. After having well considered every thing, I resolved to leave my horses at the Fort, and to trust myself to the impetuous waters of the Missouri in a skiff, accompanied by Ignatius and Gabriel. The result was most fortunate, for, on the third day of our descent, to our great surprise and joy, we heard the puffing of a steamboat. It was a real God-send to us; accordingly, our first thought was to thank God, in all the sincerity of our hearts. We soon beheld

her majestically ascending the stream. It was the first boat that had ever attempted to ascend the river in that season of the year, laden with merchandize for the Fur Trade Company. Four gentlemen from New York, proprietors of the boat, invited me to enter and remain on board.[215] I accepted with unfeigned gratitude their kind offer of hospitality; the more so, as they assured me that several parties of warriors were lying in ambush along the river. On entering the boat I was an object of great curiosity — my blackgown, my missionary cross, my long hair, attracted attention. I had thousands of questions to answer, and many long stories to relate about my journey.

I have but a few words to add. The waters were low, the sand-banks and snags everywhere numerous; the boat consequently encountered many obstacles in her passage. We were frequently in great danger of perishing. Her keel was pierced by pointed rocks, her sides rent by the snags. Twenty times the wheels had been broken to [244] pieces. The pilot's house had been carried away in the tempest; the whole cabin would have followed if it had not been made fast by a large cable. Our boat appeared to be little more than a mere wreck, and in this wreck, after forty-six days' navigation from the Yellow Stone, we arrived safely at St. Louis.

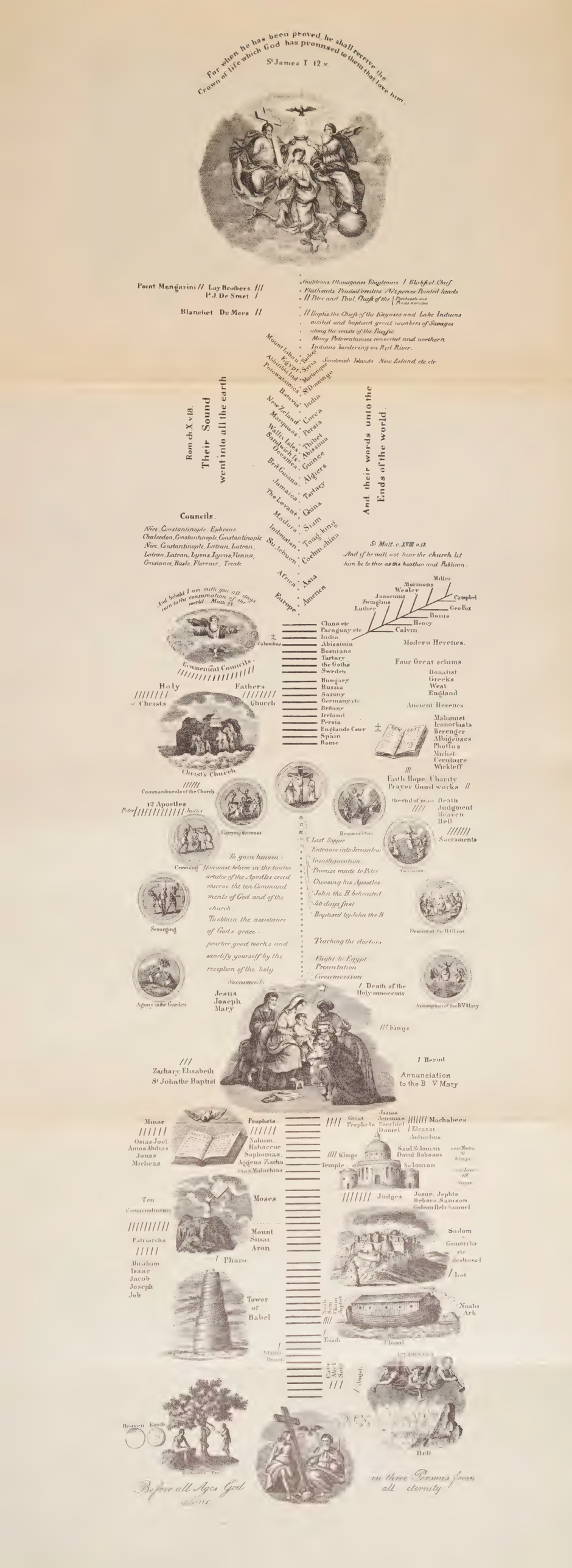
On the last Sunday of October, at 12 o'clock, I was kneeling at the foot of St. Mary's Altar, in the Cathedral, offering up my thanksgiving to God for the signal protection He had extended to his poor, unworthy servant. From the beginning of April I had travelled five thousand miles. I had descended and ascended the dangerous Columbia river. I had seen five of my companions perish in one of those life-destroying whirlpools, so justly dreaded by those who navigate that stream. I had traversed the Wallamette, crossed the Rocky Mountains, passed through the

country of the Black Feet, the desert of the Yellow Stone, and descended the Missouri; and in all these journeys I had not received the slightest injury. "Dominus memor fuit nostri et benedixit nobis." I recommend myself to your good prayers, and have the honor to remain.

Your very humble and obedient

son in Jesus Christ,

P. J. De Smet, S.J.


For when he has been proved, he shall receive the Crown of life which God has promised to them that love him.
St James I 12 v.
Point Mengarini // Lay Brothers ///
P.J. De Smet /
Blanchet De Mers //
Gouldeous Ohanagones Foxytenus / Blackfoot Chief
Flatheads Pendad'oreilles Nezperces Pointed hearts
// Peter and Paul, Chiefs of the Flatheads and Pends d'oreilles
// Baptis the Chiefs of the Kayuses and Lake Indians
visited and baptised great numbers of Savages
along the coasts of the Pacific
Many Potowatamies converted and northern
Indians bordering on Red River.
Sandwich Islands New Zeland etc etc
Mount Libau Turkey
Egypt Syria
Abbiffiti Ind Martinique
Potowatamies St Domingo
Batavia India
New Zeland Corea
Marquisas Persia
Wallis Isles Thibet
Sandwich Is Abissinia
Oceanica Guinee
Brit Guiana Algiers
Jamaica Tartary
The Levant China
Madura Siam
Indonesia Tong king
Su Ichuen Cochin china
Africa Asia
Europe America
Rom ch. X v. 18.
Their Sound went into all the earth
And their words unto the Ends of the world.
Councils.
Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus
Chalcedon, Constantinople, Constantinople
Nice, Constantinople, Latran, Latran,
Latran, Latran, Lyons, Lyons, Vienna,
Constance, Basle, Florence, Trente
St Matt. c. XVIII v. 17.
And if he will not hear the church let him be to thee as the heathen and Publican.
And behold I am with you all days even to the consumation of the world. Math 28.
Ecumenical Councils.
Holy Fathers
Christs Church
Christs Church
Commandments of the Church
12 Apostles
Peter Judas
Carrying the cross
Crowning
Scourging
Agony in the Garden
Columbus
China etc
Paraguay etc
India
Abissinia
Bosnians
Tartary
the Goths
Sweden
Hungary
Russia
Saxony
Germany etc
Britany
Ireland
Persia
Englands Cour
Spain
Rome
Miller
Mormons
Wesley
Jansenius
Zwinglius
Luther
Campbel
Geo Fox
Banis
Henry
Calvin
Modern Heretics.
Four Great schims
Donatist
Greeks
West
England
Ancient Heretics
Mahomet
Iconoclasts
Berenger
Albigenses
Photius
Michel
Cerulaire
Wickleff
Faith Hope Charity
Prayer Good works //
the end of man Death
Judgment
Heaven
Hell
Sacraments
Resurrection
Last Supper
Entrance into Jerusalem
Transfiguration
Promise made to Peter
Choosing his Apostles
John the B. beheaded
40 days fast
Baptised by John the B
Teaching the doctors
Flight to Egypt
Presentation
Circumcision
Death of the Holy innocents
Jesus
Joseph
Mary
Kings
Herod
Zachary Elisabeth
St John the Baptist
Annunciation to the B V Mary
Minor Prophets
Osias Joel
Amos Abdias
Jonas
Micheas
Nahum,
Habaccue
Sophonias,
Aggeus Zacha
rias Malachias
Great Prophets
Isaias
Jeremias
Ezechiel
Daniel
Machabees
Eleazar
Antiochus
Kings
Saul Solomon
David Roboam
Temple of Solomon
Judges
Josue, Jephte
Debora, Samson
Gedeon Heli Samuel
Ten Commandments
Moses
Mount Sinai Aron
Pharo
Patriarchs
Abraham
Isaac
Jacob
Joseph
Job
Tower of Babel
Sodom
Gomorrha etc destroyed
Lot
Noahs Ark
Enoch
Flood
Angel
Heaven Earth
Hell
Before all Ages God alone
in three Persons from all eternity

EXPLANATION OF THE INDIAN SYMBOLICAL CATECHISM

1. Four thousand years from the creation of the world to the coming of the Messiah. 1843 years from the birth of Jesus Christ to our times. (On the map, each blank line represents a century.) *Instruction.*— There is but one God; God is a spirit; He has no body; He is everywhere; He hears, sees and understands every thing; He cannot be seen, because he is a spirit. If we are good we shall see Him after our death, but the wicked shall never behold Him; He has had no beginning, and will never have an end; He is eternal; He does not grow old; He loves the good, whom he recompenses; He hates the wicked, whom he punishes. There are three persons in God; each of the three is God — they are equal in all things, &c.

2. The heavens, the earth, Adam and Eve, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the serpent, the sun, moon, stars, the angels, and hell. *Instruction.*— God is all powerful; He made the heavens and earth in six days. The first day he created matter, light, the angels. The fidelity of some and the revolt of others. Hell. The second day, the firmament, which is called heavens; the third day, the seas, plants, and trees of the earth; fourth day, the sun, [246] moon, and stars; fifth day, the birds and fishes; sixth day, the animals, Adam and Eve, the terrestrial paradise, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The seventh day was one of rest. A short time after the seventh day, the serpent tempted Eve. The fall of Adam, original sin; its consequences. Adam driven from Paradise, the joy of the Devil. The promise given of a future Saviour, the Son

of God. He did not come immediately, but 4000 years afterwards.

N. B. It is not well to interrupt too frequently the explanation of the figures on the chart. The necessary remarks on the history of religion in general may be made more advantageously apart, and in a continuous manner. Pass at once to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the mystery of Redemption, &c.

3. Death of Adam.

4. Enoch taken up into heaven; he will return at the end of the world.

5. Noah's Ark, in which four men and four women are saved; all the others perish in the deluge. *Instruction.*— The history of the deluge. The preaching of Noah. The ark was 450 feet long, 75 wide, and 45 high. Deluge lasts 12 months. The Rainbow. Sem, Cham and Japhet.

6. The Tower of Babel, built by Noah's descendants. *Instruction.*— About 150 years after the deluge; 15 stories high. Confusion of languages.

7. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh. *Instruction.*— The history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. His dreams. He is sold at the age of 16. Jacob passes over to Egypt about 22 years after his son. The Israelites reside in that country 205 years. The history of Moses, the ten plagues of Egypt. The Passover. [247] The Israelites leaving Egypt. The passage of the Red Sea. Pharaoh's army.

8. Sodom, Gomorrah, five cities destroyed by fire from heaven. Lot saved by two angels. *Instruction.*— Three angels visit Abraham. Two angels go to Sodom. The wife of Lot changed into a pillar of salt.

9. The ten commandments of God given to Moses alone on Mount Sinai. *Instruction.*— Fifty days after the Israelites have crossed the Red Sea. The promulgation of the Commandments on two tables. First fast of Moses, idola-

try of the people, prayer of Moses, golden calf, &c. Second fast of Moses. Second tables of the law, 40 years in the desert, the manna, the water issuing from the rock, the brazen serpent. Caleb and Josua. Moses prays with his arms extended. Josua. The passage of the Jordan. Fall of the walls of Jericho. The twelve Tribes. Government of God by means of Judges for the space of three to four hundred years. Josua, Debora, Gideon, Jephte, Samson, Heli, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, Roboam. *Instruction.* — The kingdom of Israel formed of ten tribes; it subsisted for 253 years, under 18 kings. That of Juda, formed of two tribes, subsisted 386 years, under 19 kings.

10. The Temple of Solomon. *Instruction.*—It was built in 7 years. Its dedication. What it contained. It was burned about the 16th year of the 34th age. It was rebuilt at the end of the captivity. This last building was very inferior, and it was at last destroyed forty years after the death of Jesus Christ. Julian, the apostate, was instrumental in accomplishing the prediction of our Saviour.

11. The four great and the twelve minor prophets.

12. Elias taken up into heaven; will return at the end of the world. Eliseus his disciple. Jonas three days in a whale's belly.

[248] 13. The captivity of Babylon. *Instruction.*— This captivity lasted for 70 years. It commenced on the 16th of the 34th age, and terminated about 86th of the 35th.

14. History of Susana, Tobias, Judith, Esther. Nabuchodonozer reduced for the space of 7 years to the condition of a brute. The three children in the furnace.

15. The Old Testament. *Instruction.*— The history of the book of the law, destroyed in the commencement of the captivity. Re-placed at the end of this time by the care of Esdras. Destroyed again under the persecution of Antiochas.

16. The holy man Eleazar. The seven Macbahees

and their mother; Antiochus, St. Joachim, and St. Anne.

17. Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph. The apparition of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias. Birth of St. John the Baptist. The angel Gabriel appears to Mary. Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word. Fear of Joseph. The visitation. Mary and Joseph leave for Bethlehem. Jerusalem is 30 leagues from Nazareth, Bethlehem is 2 leagues from Jerusalem, Emmaus 3 leagues.

18. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man for us. The history of the Annunciation.

19. Jesus Christ is born on Christmas day, at Bethlehem. The history of His birth; the angels and shepherds. The circumcision at the end of eight days. The name of Jesus.

20. The star of Jesus Christ seen in the East, predicted by Balaam.

21. The three kings (Magi.) Gaspard, Balthazar and Melchior, having seen the star, come to adore the infant Jesus. *Instruction.*— The star disappears. The Magi visit Herod. King Herod consults the priests. They point out Bethlehem. The star re-appears. The [249] adoration and presents of the Magi twelve days after our Saviour's birth.

22. Herod wishes to kill the infant Jesus. Herod's fears; his hypocrisy; his recommendation to the Magi.

23. An angel orders the three kings not to return by Herod's dominions, but by another road. The infant Jesus is carried to the temple of Jerusalem forty days after his birth. The holy man Simeon, and the holy widow Anne acknowledge Him as God. This fact comes to Herod's ears; his anger; his strange resolution with regard to the children of Bethlehem, where he thought the infant Jesus had returned.

24. An angel orders Joseph to fly into Egypt with the infant Jesus and Mary his mother. *Instruction.*— What

happened the night after the presentation in the Temple. By the command of Herod all the little children in the town and environs of Bethlehem are put to death.

26. He falls sick and dies at the end of a month, devoured by worms. (Croiset, 18 vol. page 17.)

27. An angel orders St. Joseph to carry the infant Jesus, and Mary his mother, back into their own country. They return to Nazareth.

28. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, go up every year to the temple to celebrate the Passover.

29. Mary and Joseph lose the infant Jesus at the age of twelve years, and find him at the end of three days, in the temple, in the midst of the doctors of the law. *Instruction.* — Fear of Joseph and Mary. Words of his mother. Answer of Jesus.

30. Jesus Christ dwelt visibly on earth for more than 33 years.

31. He taught men the manner of living holily. He [250] gave them the example, and obtained for them the grace to follow it, by his sufferings and death.

32. St. John baptizes Jesus Christ. *Instruction.*— The birth of the precursor; his life and fasting; his disciples. He declares he is not the Messiah. He points Him out as the Lamb of God. His death. The heavens open at the baptism of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost descends. The Eternal Father speaks. Jesus Christ goes into the desert. He fasted for forty days. He is tempted by the devil. The preaching of Christ during three years. His life, His doctrine, His miracles.

33. The twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ — Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Jude, Simon, Judas.

34. St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, and the first Pope.

35. The Apostles the first Bishops.

36. Judas sells his master for thirty pieces of money. Hatred of the Jews. The treason of Judas.

37. Mount Calvary. The cross of Jesus Christ. The other crosses and the robbers.

38. Jesus Christ died on Good Friday. History of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Crucified at 12 o'clock and died at 3. Darkness over the earth. Miracles. Repentance of the executioners. His soul descends into hell. His body is embalmed and laid in the sepulchre, and guarded by Roman soldiers.

39. Jesus Christ rises from the dead on Easter day. History of the Resurrection. He appears to Mary, to St. Peter, to the two disciples going to Emmaus, to the Apostles. Incredulity of St. Thomas. Christ's apparition eight days after. Then also at the lake of Tiberias. The [251] confession of St. Peter. The mission of the Apostles.

40. Jesus Christ ascends into heaven on Ascension day, 40 days after His resurrection. He sends the Holy Ghost to His Church 10 days after His ascension. Wonders and mysteries of the day.

41. He will return to the earth at the end of the world for the general judgment.

42. The seven Sacraments, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ for our sanctification. The three Sacraments that can be received but once. The five Sacraments of the living. The two of the dead.

43. Prayer in order to obtain the assistance of the grace of God. St. Paul and St. Matthias.

44. Our duties for every day, every week, every month, every year.

45. The six Commandments of the Church.

46. The Church of Constantine the great.

47. The cross of Jesus Christ found on Calvary by St. Helen, after having sought it for three years. The miracu-

lous cross of Constantine. The invention of the Holy Cross. The cross carried by Heraclius in the seventh century. Julian the Apostate.

48. The New Testament. The arrangement of the Canon. The discipline ordained by the Council of Nice.

50. St. Augustine converts the English and teaches them the religion of Christ or the Catholic religion.

51. The English follow the religion of Christ, or the Catholic religion, for 900 years.

52. Luther, Calvin, Henry VIII. wander from the way of Christ, reject His religion, that is, the Catholic church. The by-road and its forks represent the Reformation, with its divisions or variations for the last 300 years. The straight road of Jesus Christ existed a long time before. [252] Lucifer or Satan, the first to take a wrong road — he seduces Adam and Eve and their descendants to accompany him. Jesus Christ comes to conduct us into the right road, and enable us to keep it by the grace of redemption. The devil is enraged at the loss he suffers; but he succeeded in the following ages, by inducing men to walk in a new, bad road, that of the pretended Reformation.

53. Arius, Macedonius, Pelagius, Nestorius, Eutyches, Monothelites.

54. Mahomet, Iconoclasts, Berenger, Albigenses, Photius, Wicleff.

55. The four great schisms — of the Donatists, the Greeks, the West, and of England.

56. Luther, Calvin, Henry VIII.

57. Baius, Jansenius, Wesley.

58. The sacred phalanx of the Œcumenical councils.

59. The priests came into the Indian country to teach the Indians the right road or the religion of Jesus Christ, to make them the children of the Catholic church.

60. History of the Catholic missions now flourishing throughout the world.

Important
Historical Publications
OF
The Arthur H. Clark Company

Full descriptive circulars will be mailed
on application

AUDUBON'S WESTERN JOURNAL: 1849-1850

Being the MS. record of a trip from New York to Texas, and an overland journey through Mexico and Arizona to the gold-fields of California

By

JOHN W. AUDUBON

With biographical memoir by his daughter

MARIA R. AUDUBON

Edited by

FRANK HEYWOOD HODDER

Professor of American History, University of Kansas

With folded map, portrait, and original drawings

JOHN W. AUDUBON, son of the famous ornithologist, was a member of Colonel Webb's California Expedition which started from New York City for the gold-fields in February, 1849. The Journal consists of careful notes which Audubon made en route. It was written with a view to publication, accompanied by a series of sketches made at intervals during the journey; but owing to Audubon's pre-occupation with other affairs, the plan of publication was never realized.

The Journal is, therefore, here published for the first time, and is illustrated by the author's original sketches, carefully reproduced. It gives a vivid first-hand picture of the difficulties of an overland journey to California, and of the excitements, dangers, and privations of life in the

gold-fields. An additional interest attaches to this account from the fact that Colonel Webb deserted his party, which consisted of nearly a hundred men, when the expedition reached Roma, and the command then by unanimous choice of the party devolved upon Audubon. This situation, as modestly related by the author, displays his sympathetic nature, as well as his keenness and ability as a leader.

Besides being a fascinating story of adventure, the Journal throws much light on the interesting years immediately following the discovery of gold in California. John W. Audubon was (with his brother Victor G. Audubon) the assistant of his father, and executed much of the artistic work on the famous "Quadrupeds of North America." His pictures of the spreading of the gold craze in the East, the journey through Mexico, and the social conditions after reaching California, show him to be a keen and faithful observer.

The Editor, Professor F. H. Hodder, of the University of Kansas, has supplied complete annotation explaining matters of topography, natural science, and historical and personal allusions. Professor Hodder in his editorial work has drawn liberally upon his special knowledge of the history and geography of the West and Southwest. A biographical memoir has been written by Miss Maria R. Audubon. Being the daughter of the author, she has availed herself of a large amount of auxiliary material not accessible to any other biographer.

Printed direct from type on Dickinson's deckle-edged paper, and illustrated with folded map, portrait, and plates, in one volume, 8vo, about 225 pages, cloth, uncut.

Price $3.00 net.

The Arthur H. Clark Company
PUBLISHERS CLEVELAND, OHIO

PERSONAL NARRATIVE

OF

Travels in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky; and of a Residence in the Illinois Territory: 1817-1818

BY

ELIAS PYM FORDHAM

With facsimiles of the author's sketches and plans

Edited with Notes, Introduction, Index, etc., by

FREDERIC AUSTIN OGG, A.M.

Author of "The Opening of the Mississippi"

AN UNPUBLISHED MS. This hitherto unpublished MS., which is a real literary and historical find, was written in 1817-18 by a young Englishman of excellent education who assisted Morris Birkbeck in establishing his Illinois settlement. The author writes anonymously, but by a careful study of various allusions in the *Narrative* and from information furnished by the family in possession of the MS., has been identified as Elias Pym Fordham. Landing at Baltimore, he reached the West by way of Philadelphia, Pittsburg, and the Ohio River to Cincinnati, describing the people and the country as he went along.

THE MIDDLE WEST IN 1817 Fordham was an especially well-qualified observer of the Middle West because of the numerous journeys he undertook, on land-hunting trips for new emigrants, in the service of Mr. Birkbeck. These journeys led him into Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky;

and he never omits the opportunity to make frank and pointed comment on society, manners, and morals, as well as careful observations of the face of the country and of industrial conditions. The style is quite unaffected and has much natural charm and sprightliness; and the fact that he wrote anonymously made him much more free in his comments on contemporary society than would otherwise have been possible.

LOCAL AND PIONEER HISTORY

These journeys also gave him unexampled opportunities for contact with the pioneers of the Middle West, and his journal is consequently rich in *personalia* of early settlers, remarks on contemporary history and politics, state of trade, agriculture, prices, and information on local history not obtainable elsewhere. He also visited the larger cities and gives very interesting accounts of Pittsburg and Cincinnati, accompanied by original sketches and plans. In Kentucky he had the opportunity to study slavery; and although at first prejudiced against this institution he finally reached the conclusion that the slave states offered better chances of successful settlement than the free states.

VALUE FOR READERS AND STUDENTS

The publication of Fordham's *Narrative* with introduction, extensive annotations, and index by Professor Frederic A. Ogg, one of the best authorities on the history of the Mississippi Valley, will make accessible to historical students much new and important material, besides giving the general reader a book of vital and absorbing interest.

Printed direct from type on Dickinson's deckle-edged paper, and illustrated with original sketches and plans, in one volume, 8vo, about 180 pages, cloth, uncut.

Price $3.00 net.

The Arthur H. Clark Company

PUBLISHERS CLEVELAND, OHIO

"We cannot thoroughly understand our own history, local or National, without some knowledge of these routes of trade and war."—*The Outlook.*

The Historic Highways of America

by Archer Butler Hulbert

A series of monographs on the History of America as portrayed in the evolution of its highways of War, Commerce, and Social Expansion.

Comprising the following volumes:

I—Paths of the Mound-Building Indians and Great Game Animals.
II—Indian Thoroughfares.
III—Washington's Road: The First Chapter of the Old French War.
IV—Braddock's Road.
V—The Old Glade (Forbes's) Road.
VI—Boone's Wilderness Road.
VII—Portage Paths: The Keys of the Continent.
VIII—Military Roads of the Mississippi Basin.
IX—Waterways of Westward Expansion.
X—The Cumberland Road.
XI, XII—Pioneer Roads of America, two volumes.
XIII, XIV—The Great American Canals, two volumes.
XV—The Future of Road-Making in America.
XVI—Index.

Sixteen volumes, crown 8vo, cloth, uncut, gilt tops. A LIMITED EDITION only printed direct from type, and the type distributed. Each volume handsomely printed in large type on Dickinson's hand-made paper, and illustrated with maps, plates, and facsimiles.

Published a volume each two months, beginning September, 1902.

PRICE, volumes 1 and 2, $2.00 net each; volumes 3 to 16, $2.50 net each.

FIFTY SETS PRINTED ON LARGE PAPER, each numbered and *signed by the author*. Bound in cloth, with paper label, uncut, gilt tops. Price, $5.00 net per volume.

"The fruit not only of the study of original historical sources in documents found here and in England, but of patient and enthusiastic topographical studies, in the course of which every foot of these old historic highways has been traced and traversed."—*The Living Age.*

"The volumes already issued show Mr. Hulbert to be an earnest and enthusiastic student, and a reliable guide."—*Out West.*

"A look through these volumes shows most conclusively that a new source of history is being developed—a source which deals with the operation of the most effective causes influencing human affairs."—*Iowa Journal of History and Politics.*

"The successive volumes in the series may certainly be awaited with great interest, for they promise to deal with the most romantic phases of the awakening of America at the dawn of occidental civilization."—*Boston Transcript.*

"The publishers have done their part toward putting forth with proper dignity this important work. It is issued on handsome paper and is illustrated with many maps, diagrams, and old prints."—*Chicago Evening Post.*

16931 Vol. 2 917.8
T38

AUTHOR
Thwaites

TITLE
Travels in the Far West

917.8
T38

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY